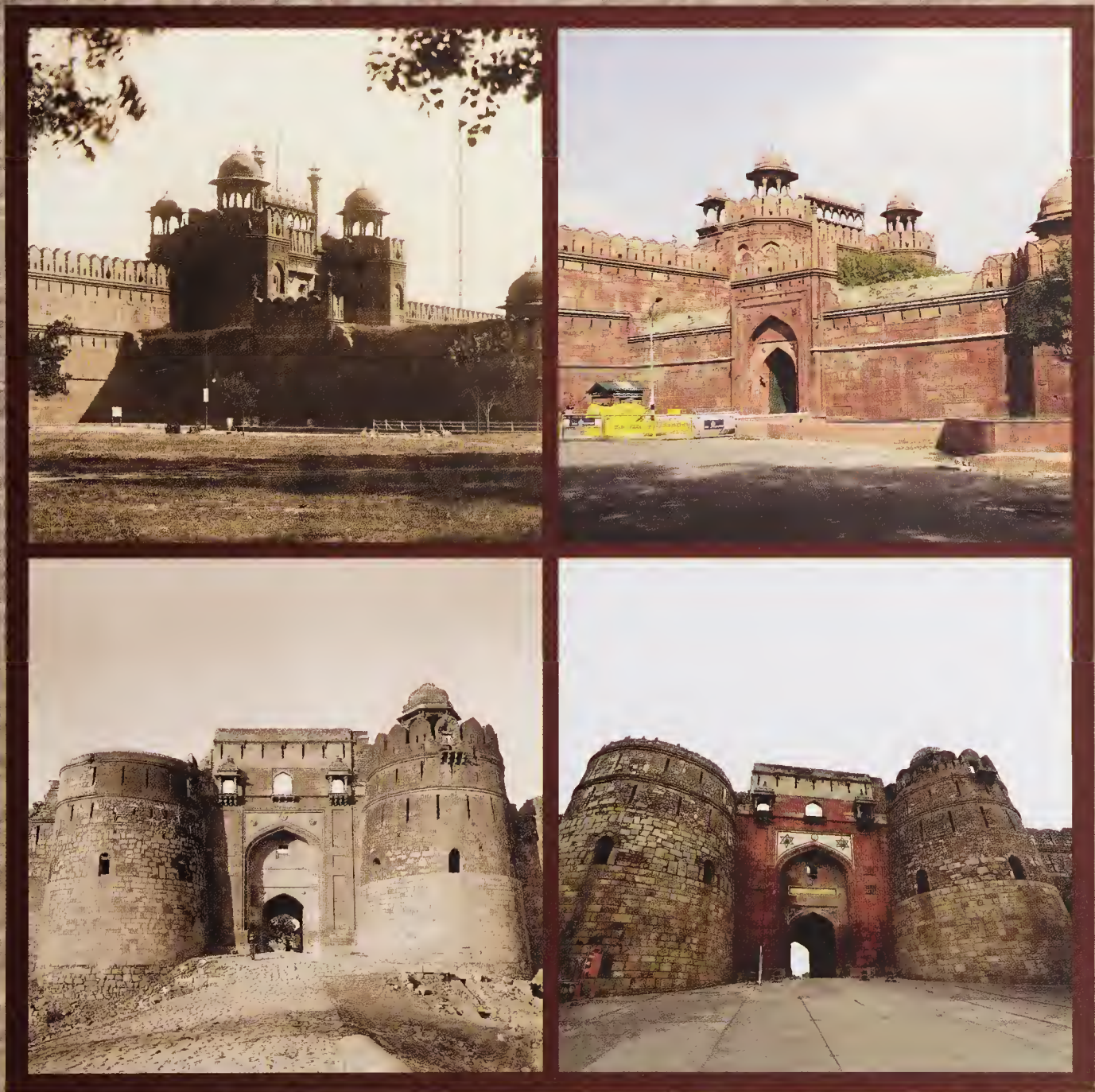
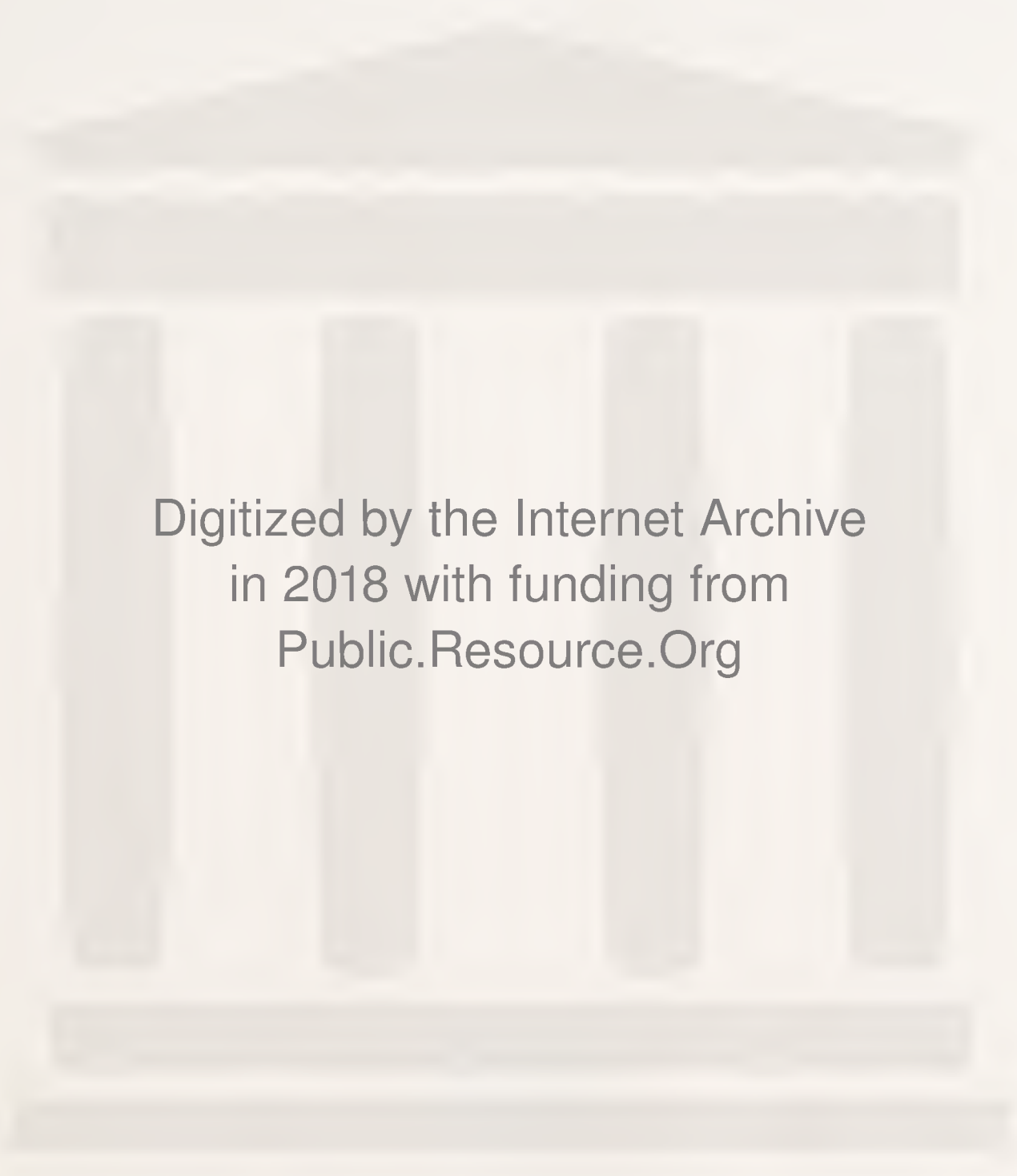


ROMANCING DELHI

FROM LAL-KOT TO SHAHJAHANABAD



URMILA VARMA



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प्रत्यक्षीर्तिमपावृणु

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Delhi, the city that would never die. A city so strategically located, that for centuries rulers made it their capital. Through much of its history, Delhi has been called by various names, the details of which are known through various inscriptions found at different places.

An inscription dated to Muhammad-bin-Tughluq's time and now preserved in the Red Fort Museum in Delhi, refers to the city of Dhillika being in Haryana, while in some records, Haryana itself has been used as a name of this region of Delhi.

Another inscription, which is known as the Palam Baoli inscription, dated 1276, of the time of Ghiyathuddin Balban, states that the town of Dilli was in Haryana. The Palam Baoli inscription also mentions Yoginipura as an alternative to Dilli and mentions its location to be in the village called Palamba (present day Palamgaon). However, no village by the name of Yoginipura exists now. Interestingly, instead of Indraprastha, Yoginipura is the name, which occurs in later Jain *pattavalis* and early medieval inscriptions. The name Indraprastha survives in the *Puranas* and in Tantric works.

When the British bureaucrats took charge of the administration of Delhi, they were shrewd enough to realize that the use of the name Dilli by Hindus, and Dehli by Muslims was more than likely to raise controversies. To avoid any problem arising because of a mere name, the

bureaucrats in Delhi, having discussed the matter at the administrative as well as at the judiciary level, consulted their counterparts in London. The name was finally decided as Delhi, a nomenclature, which has remained unchanged since then.

The grandeur of the Mughals, the last monarchs of this city, was so pervasive, that the name Delhi was not only inseparably linked with the Mughals, but also became almost synonymous with them. However, that is only one side of the story. This region has many more fascinating stories to unfold. If we take a little time off and probe into the records beyond the Mughal era, going back in time, we discover vistas that stretch as far back as the prehistoric era.

We find prehistoric habitation, which covered an area much larger than the southern part of present downtown Delhi, and came to light quite by chance. In 1996, archeologists discovered prehistoric tools in a place called Anangpur, once a remote village but now standing a few kilometers distant from Khanpur and Deoli. The little hamlet of Anangpur successfully resisted change and somehow protected and treasured all the tools and fossils of men and animals of the Stone Age. The lull, the wilderness and unhampered gentle breeze is still inviting. The route to this village is through a hilly track but there is another route as well via the old fortress of Tughluqabad. It is

interesting to note that in the Anangpur region, archaeologists have discovered the site of a primitive Stone Age factory (Pl. 1) where tools like hand axes (Pl. 2), cleavers (Pl. 3), tools for mincing meat and scrapers were found. The fact that this region had all the basic amenities, like water, a dense game forest and raw materials, must have made the place an obvious choice for settlement.

Another interesting fact was brought to light by remote sensing geo-satellite data, which proved that the sacred River Yamuna once flowed in this area during the prehistoric era, which, despite having changed its course several times, continues to exist in nearby Delhi area.

Having thus glimpsed the prehistoric age, one can now look for traces of earliest human civilization in the Delhi region. The first name, which appears on the horizon, is Indraprastha, referred to in the great Hindu epic the *Mahabharata*. Records of that era, which are well preserved in the epics, *Puranas*, *Jatakas* and also in oral traditions, begin to unfold and acquaint us with the glorious past.

Significantly, until the beginning of the present century, a village known as Indrapatlay within the precincts of Purana Qila. The villagers knew it as Pandavon-ka-Qila meaning the fort of the Pandavas, the heroes of the *Mahabharata*. This clearly indicates that the word Indrapat was a distortion of Indraprastha, the



Pl. 1. Prehistoric site, Anangpur.

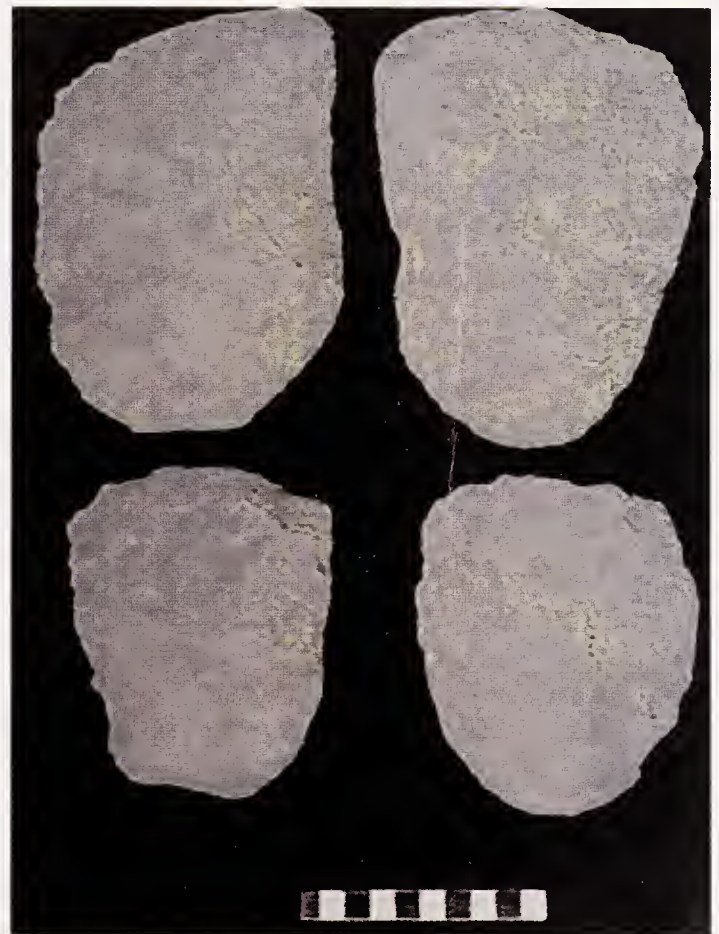
correct name of the capital of Delhi; it nevertheless contributed much to the city's history. A well planned township, Indraprastha was strictly based on the science of architecture, which seems to have been highly developed in the country since that era.

As the story goes, when the Pandavas received a tract of densely forested Khandavaprastha as their share, they first cleared the tract with the help of fire. It was then measured and proportionately divided on the principles laid out in the *Vedas* and canons of Mayasura, a treatise on town planning and architecture. A *yajna*-a form of propitiating the Gods by the lighting of a sacrificial fire, was then performed to invoke the benevolence of the Supreme Being. This was considered

essential for sanctifying the land. The form of the city was then decided on the basis of the *Vastupurusha Mandala*, a scientific formula that determined the relationship of the physical form of a settlement with the spiritual, cosmic, and behavioural systems. The city was further divided into well planned sectors, the allocation of which was done in line with the social order of the time. According to the *Mahabharata*, the city was made strong by high protecting walls, surrounded by moats, which were wide like the oceans. It is also amazing to learn from the same source, that the city's palaces and houses were on wheels and could be transported, or shifted from one place to the other. It was surmised by some, that these buildings were probably made of wood, which



Pl. 2. Hand axes from Anangpur



Pl. 3. Cleavers from Anangpur

facilitated the movement. That perhaps could be the reason for the difficulty encountered by the archaeologists in tracing the physical remains of the buildings of that era. However, since the archaeologists have discovered parts of constructed buildings, this remains a mere conjecture.

Having scanned the scriptures, the epics and the oral tradition, the archaeologists in Delhi during three phases of excavation, were able to locate a small mound in Purana Qila (Pl. 4), under which lay the ruins of the ancient city of Indraprastha. Painted Grey Ware, which has authentically been linked to that era, was found along with few other objects like incense burners and figurines. According to the famous

archaeologist Alexander Cunningham, Yudhishtira (the eldest of the Pandavas) had established the city of Indraprastha in 1500 BC. The archaeologists confirmed it as the site of the ancient city of Indraprastha, which was the first developed city in this region. It was stated to date back to approximately 1000 BC to 800 BC. But, this of course, was on the basis of the data gathered in the first three phases of excavation (Pl. 5), which they themselves felt was to be treated as preliminary. They definitely felt that a much deeper probe was needed to lead to any authentic conclusion. This seems to indicate a fairly strong possibility of the dates being pushed to an even more ancient past. The panoramic changes witnessed by this land, and



Pl. 4. A general view of Purana Qila .



Pl. 5. A general view of Purana Qila excavations.

its continuity, the ability to attract monarchies is something exceptional. It has always been the capital city.

The subject of changing panoramas did attract the questioning mind. A Greek Geographer who visited this country during the second century AD had marked Daidala close to Inderbara. According to his account, Daidala was founded by a king called Delu.

In some inscription, this area was also mentioned as a part of Hariyanaka or Haryana, the area where the four gates of Indraprastha were located. A place known as Yoginipura, of the same era, was also linked with Delhi. But surprisingly, no remains of the place with the name Dhillu have been found, although

Alexander Cunningham had agreed with the view of the chronicler Muhammad-bin-Qasim's *Tarikh-i-Farishta* that Delhi derived its name from Raja Delu or Dhillu. Another source which mentions this name is an inscription, known as the Bijolia inscription, dated to AD 1170 and deriving its name from the place Bijolia in Rajasthan from where it was found.

It was the strategic position of the Golden Triangle, which stretches from the northern end of the ridge to the banks of River Yamuna, that maintained its tantalizing hold over the seekers of power. Consequently, the story of Delhi is not just the story of one urban settlement but also a story of location shifting through the ages. But it is not its age alone which inspires the interest in the city. Its age

is uncertain and there are other cities in the world, continuously inhabited which are older than Delhi. What then makes the story so fascinating? The answer lies in its historic role and the fact that it has been the site of a succession of cities, the seat of empires, and that is a record which has remained unbroken. What makes the story even more fascinating is the presence of the remains of all the previous cities or centers of empire.

The Golden Triangle remained the undisputed choice of those who sought to rule over Delhi, and any invader who captured and ruled Delhi was considered to hold sway over the entire Hindustan. No ruler could be regarded a ruler of India unless he held Delhi with him.

After the days of Indraprastha, the story of Delhi seems to have been lost in the mist of time, for many years. Though there is evidence to prove the antiquity of Delhi to three thousand years and even to the times of the Indus Valley civilization, the city followed the normal crave for rising to prominence at times and then falling into total oblivion. The vastness of the land tempted the rulers to move palaces, city and all, to more inviting or safer locales nearby, which thus created a number of establishments, giving rise to controversies about the number of cities of Delhi.

The historians and archaeologists unanimously accept the seven well-developed establishments, which fit into the formal definition of a city. The names

included in the authentic list are:

1.	Qila Rai Pithora and Lal-Kot	AD 1052
2.	Siri	AD 1303
3.	Tughluqabad	AD 1321
4.	Jahanpanah	AD 1334
5.	Firozabad (and Kotla)	AD 1354
6.	Dinpanah	AD 1530
7.	Shahjahanabad and Lal Qila	AD 1648

The first in the list, the city of Lal-Kot and Qila Rai Pithora owes its existence to a Tomar Rajput king by the name of Raja Delu. A king of uncommon valour, Raja Delhu/ Delu conquered a vast territory, occupied it and established his kingdom. Farishta has recorded that Raja Delu's biggest achievement was establishing the city of Delhi. The location of Delhi at that time, as described by Farishta, was somewhere between Qutb Minar and the site of Indraprastha (which would be around Purana Qila). In the fortieth year of Delu's reign, Ohoor, a prince of Delu's own family, rebelled against him and defeated him. However, nothing significant seems to have happened during Ohoor's reign.

The next name which appears on the record is that of Anangpal, of the same Rajput clan. Historians seem to differ on the point of the founder of the city of Delhi. According to Percival Spear, it was Anangpal who founded the city of Delhi. The village of Anangpur, which is in the

centre of the basin, has immortalized his name. The factor of security seemed to be the main reason for selecting such a barren and rocky terrain for the founding of a city.

According to various legends and genealogical accounts, the first name of the Tomar dynasty on the list was mentioned as Vilhanadeva, Bilandeva Jaju or Jaula who seemed to have acquired the title of Anangpal after he obtained the rulership of that area and came to be known as Anangpal I. Anangpur, also called Anekpur was within Anangpal's kingdom. Though there are two or possibly even three rulers of the same name, Anangpur seems to have been inhabited by the first ruler of that name and Lal-Kot by Anangpal II.

After the excavation conducted in the recent past, the data available did not solve the controversy surrounding the date of construction of the Anangpur fort. Further probe into the data revealed that it was constructed by Anangpal I. The fort lies in Faridabad district of Haryana and is located towards the west of Anangpur village. It is situated towards the eastern slopes of the hillock, which is located in the present habitation area. The habitation has indeed considerably increased in the recent past. Many modern constructions have come up all over the area. The village of Anangpur, 30 km south of Delhi and five km south-

west of Suraj-Kund, is on the quartzite tableland of Aravalli. It can be found on the Gurgaon-Tughluqabad stretch.

The fort of Anangpur was first discovered by Carr Stephen and some other archaeologists, but no details were either observed or recorded. Later, in 1991 and 1992, investigations were carried out under the supervision of B.R. Mani of the Delhi Circle of the Archaeological Survey of India.

The present data only leads to the conclusion that the fort of Anangpur was constructed by Anangpal I and the fort of Lal-Kot by Anangpal II. Since Anangpal II constructed and inhabited the area of Lal-Kot, the earlier Tomars, who had a feudalistic stature under the Pratiharas in the beginning, settled in the Aravallis during eighth century and continued till they became independent rulers. That was the time when the fort of Anangpur must have been constructed. They moved to the Lal-Kot area in the eleventh century and founded a new city named Dhilli or Dhillikapur, which happened to be in the vicinity of the temple town of Yoginipura. A large number of temples were constructed by them. The ruins of these temples can still be found strewn around the Qutb archaeological area.

The excavations carried out by archaeologists in 1950 and then from 1992 to 1995 reveal some interesting features of Lal-Kot, Qila Rai Pithora and Anangtal. Lal-Kot is the earliest

known fort in Delhi. A trench dug to the south of Qutb Minar revealed a well laid street. Another trench dug across the ramparts of Qila Rai Pithora to the south-west of Hodra-ka-Bagh exposed a seven meter wide wall retained with one meter wide masonry and an interior filled with earth.

Anangpur dam (Pl. 6), constructed to store water for irrigation, was about 50 meters wide and seven meters high, with trap doors at ravines, and was another structural marvel of the Rajput period.

Lal-Kot, the first city of Delhi, finds a mention in the famous book of bardic tradition, the *Prithivirajaso*. Soon after the Tomar Rajputs established the kingdom, not only did Delhi come

into prominence, even Indraprastha's memory was revived and it acquired a kind of reflected glory. Building and renovation activity gained momentum during Anangpal's reign. A number of monuments were constructed at this time, which have either partially or wholly survived. A place called Suraj-Kund, not far from the citadel, has also survived. It is an example of the architectural skill and knowledge of the artisans of that time.

The stone embankment of Suraj-Kund (Pl. 7) was initially built as a catchment area to store excess rain water flowing from the surrounding hills. The tank is built on a semi-circular plan. A temple of the Sun god, which has survived the



Pl. 6. A view of Anangpur dam

ravages of time, was constructed on a hill on the western side. The tank has derived its name of Suraj-Kund from the temple. As a part of the pillage, the carved stone pillars of this temple were reused in the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque, built by the Muslim rulers to celebrate their victory over the Rajputs. It is believed that earlier, a large temple existed at the site where Sultan Ghari's Tomb now exists. The earlier temple was supposedly erected by the Tomar Rajputs, whose seat of empire existed at Lal-Kot, and extended to the hills of south Delhi. The remains of the Hindu and Jain temples are evident in the Qutb area.

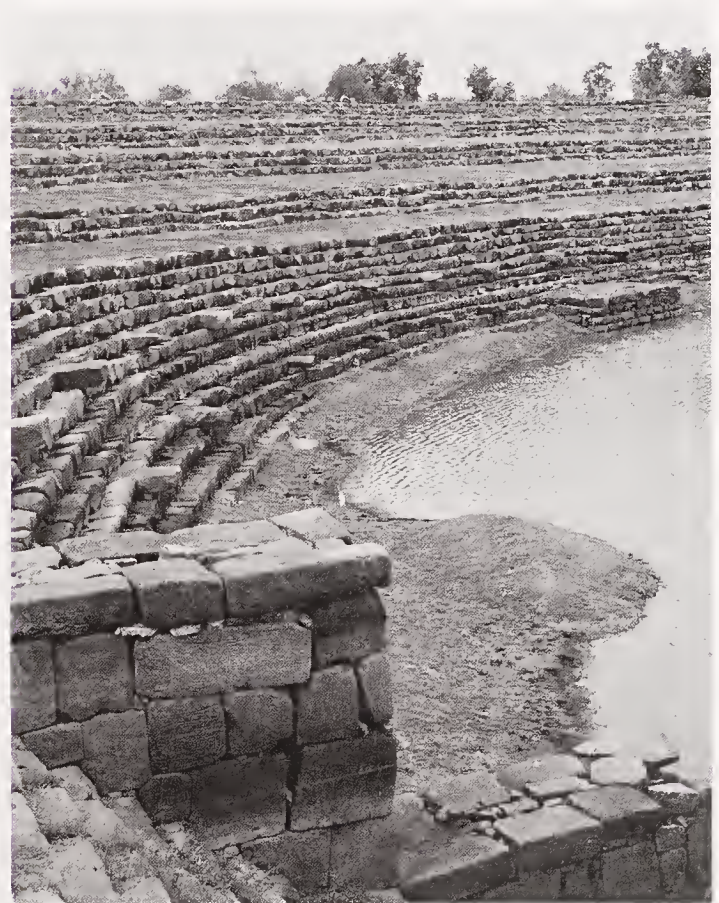
At Suraj-Kund (Pls. 8, 9 & 10), one can even today take glimpse of

the richly carved doors, pillars and ramparts. Because of the vast changes in the topography and unprecedented expansion of the city, the area of Suraj-Kund has come closer to the newly inhabited colonies of South Delhi. But it wasn't so, about a decade ago. The area then was totally uncared for wilderness, in a state of absolute desolation. Now the precincts of Suraj-Kund have been developed into a beautiful picnic spot and tourist resort.

Raja Anangpal moved his capital from Suraj-Kund to Lal-Kot (Pl. 11) which was three km northward and close to the village of Anangpur. Surprisingly, no colony has so far come up in the vicinity of Lal-Kot. A famous temple of



Pl. 7. Stone embankment at Suraj-Kund, Faridabad.



Pl. 8. A view of Suraj-Kund, Faridabad.



Pl. 9. Another view of Suraj-Kund, Faridabad.



Pl. 10. Panoramic view of Suraj-Kund, Faridabad.

Yogamaya, which is said to have been built at the time of the Pandavas, lies within its outer ramparts. Another ancient landmark, which was once an academy imparting knowledge and training to gain insight into the cosmic energy, is located close to the ruins of Lal-Kot and is known as the Prachin Shakti Gyan Pith.

Lal-Kot was of an irregular oblong design, three and a half km across. The walls of this massive fort (Pl. 9) were lofty and could be compared to the walls of Tughluqabad, a later fort. The Thickness of the rampart walls was 20-30 feet. These massive ramparts had a general height of 60 feet above the bottom of the ditch. They stand

lofty and majestic even today. There was a wide and extensive ditch, which used to be filled with water, to form a wide moat. There were large bastions at all the strategic points. The largest ones, standing on the northern side, were named Fateh Burj or the tower of victory, and Sohan Burj, perhaps so named after a valiant warrior. The long line of walls between these bastions has a number of small towers with wide base. To further strengthen the defence line, there was yet another outer wall, which could be called the outer fortification, and was 30 feet in height. With this kind of defence arrangement the security should have been perfect, but still the invaders managed to find some loopholes, somewhere.



Pl. 11. Lal-Kot, general view showing Ranjit Gate



Pl. 12. Lal-Kot, succession of bastions.

Raja Anangpal had erected an iron pillar (Pl. 13 a, b & c), said to have been brought from some unidentified Vishnu temple. Two large stone lions stood guard at the gateway. Close to the gate and between the two lions hung a huge bell, meant to be used by the general public, who had complete freedom to ring the bell at any time of night or day to speak to the king about their grievances. In later times, Emperor Jahangir seemed to have taken a cue from this and had a similar bell installed at his palace, too.

The citadel of Lal-Kot had many distinguishing features. The position of the gates was very judicious. A gate called the Ranjit Gate (see Pl. 11) had a large upright stone and had well marked grooves for the ascent and descent of

the portcullis. Since there was plenty of stone available, every part of the building was built on a massive scale. The stone used for the gate itself was 12 to 15 feet in height with a width of more than two feet. Ironically, it was through this gate that Muslim invaders found access to the citadel. A gap in the walls, owing to an oversight, gave access to the invaders.

Some historians believe that during the tenth - twelfth centuries there was another royal residence, existing in the vicinity of the Qutb and was known as the *Kasr-e-safed* or a white palace. It was a famous and elaborate palace-complex. Sometime later, when Lal-Kot was sacked, many of these structures were in ruins and sank underground.



Pl. 13 a. Iron pillar, Mehrauli. Pl. 13 b. Details of top.

Pl. 13 c. Gupta period inscription on the pillar.

The white palace, with its limestone plastering, was noteworthy and Ibn Batuta, the well known chronicler, has written about it.

A place of such antiquity could not escape the attention of archaeologists. The excavations (Pls. 14 & 15) were carried out a few years ago and artefacts of the Rajput era were discovered in the fifth and sixth layers of the excavations. A tank called Anang Tal also surfaced. An eight-petalled lotus-shaped octagonal tank was found within the palace-complex, which was to be supplied water from Anang Tal. This tank was meant to store water for the use of royalty. Anang Tal was a huge tank, 48 by 45 meters, with a depth of about 10 to 12 meters. It was neatly bound by wall of stone, fixed

with iron clamps. The stone slabs bore marks such as *svastika*, bow, arrow and trident, which are believed to be the marks of individual masons who worked on these slabs. Since these marks feature prominently in Hinduism, presumably that was the religion practiced here.

The Tomar Rajputs reigned there for a long period. However, another clan of Rajputs, the Chauhans was gaining power and there came a time when Chauhans grew powerful enough to pose a threat to the Tomar Rajputs. The Tomar kings, who had enjoyed peace and luxury for long, sought a peaceful solution through intermarriage, a common practice among royal families then. This plan had potential and could have worked wonders in forming a great



Pl. 14. Remains of an excavated structure, Lal-Kot.



Pl. 15. Terracottas (top) and view of excavated structures Lal-Kot (1992-1995).

empire had the internal disharmony not led to disunity amongst both the parties. The Chauhan Rajputs overthrew the Tomar Rajputs.

A Chauhan king called Vigraharaj ruled over Sakambhari in Rajasthan. This place is now identified with Sambhar, well known because of the adjoining salt lake. Vigraharaj's third grandson Prithviraj, with knight like qualities, gained power soon. He proved to be a brave warrior, and a prince of exceptional ability. After his accession to the throne, he took a keen interest in the matters of the kingdom, improved administration and consolidated his empire.

He found it necessary to strengthen and extend the citadel of Lal-Kot, the boundaries of which, following the expansion, had encompassed an extensive area of the land. Working on his expansion plan, Prithviraj constructed another fort and named it after his own title of Rai Pithora. Prithviraj was adorned with this title for his valour, his ability to rule and the qualities of knighthood.

The new fort of Qila Rai Pithora was constructed on a hill near Lal-Kot and surrounded the citadel of Lal-Kot from three sides. This measure proved protective to the then Rajput city of Delhi. The ramparts of the fort (Pls. 16 & 17), built of quartzite stone were so massive that they could house many storerooms and ammunition rooms. The Badaun Gate occupied a place of prestige, as it had become the main entrance of Qila

Rai Pithora. The fort was four km in circumference, roughly three times to that of Lal-Kot. But in spite of all this, the defence of the city proved inferior to that of Lal-Kot. The height of the walls was half the height of Lal-Kot and the bastions were much farther apart. The extended ramparts had covered such a vast area that they encompassed the present Qutb Minar and the entire Mehrauli area. The outer ramparts extended up to where the Indian Institute of Technology stand today on one side and the ILT on the other.

This is the point where the ancient past joins hands with the modern in the city of Delhi. The people living here still call it the area of Lal-Kot. The scattered remains of the past eras, found over a vast area in its vicinity, make it a spectacular cluster of the remains of medieval buildings. The Archaeological Survey of India is taking an active interest in the protection of the medieval era monuments and some excavations were conducted in the area. The entire field is likely to come alive when new light is shed by new finds and discoveries made during these excavations.

The wall of the city of Qila Rai Pithora, from the north bastion called Fateh Burj to Dam Dama in the south-west of modern-day Delhi, ran up to the south of the hill where Adham Khan's tomb is situated. From there, running through the ridge, it was traceable up to Metcalfe House. It is felt that one of the nine gates



Pl. 16, Rampart wall, Qila Rai Pithora.



Qila Rai Pithora. Pl. 17. Northern rampart,

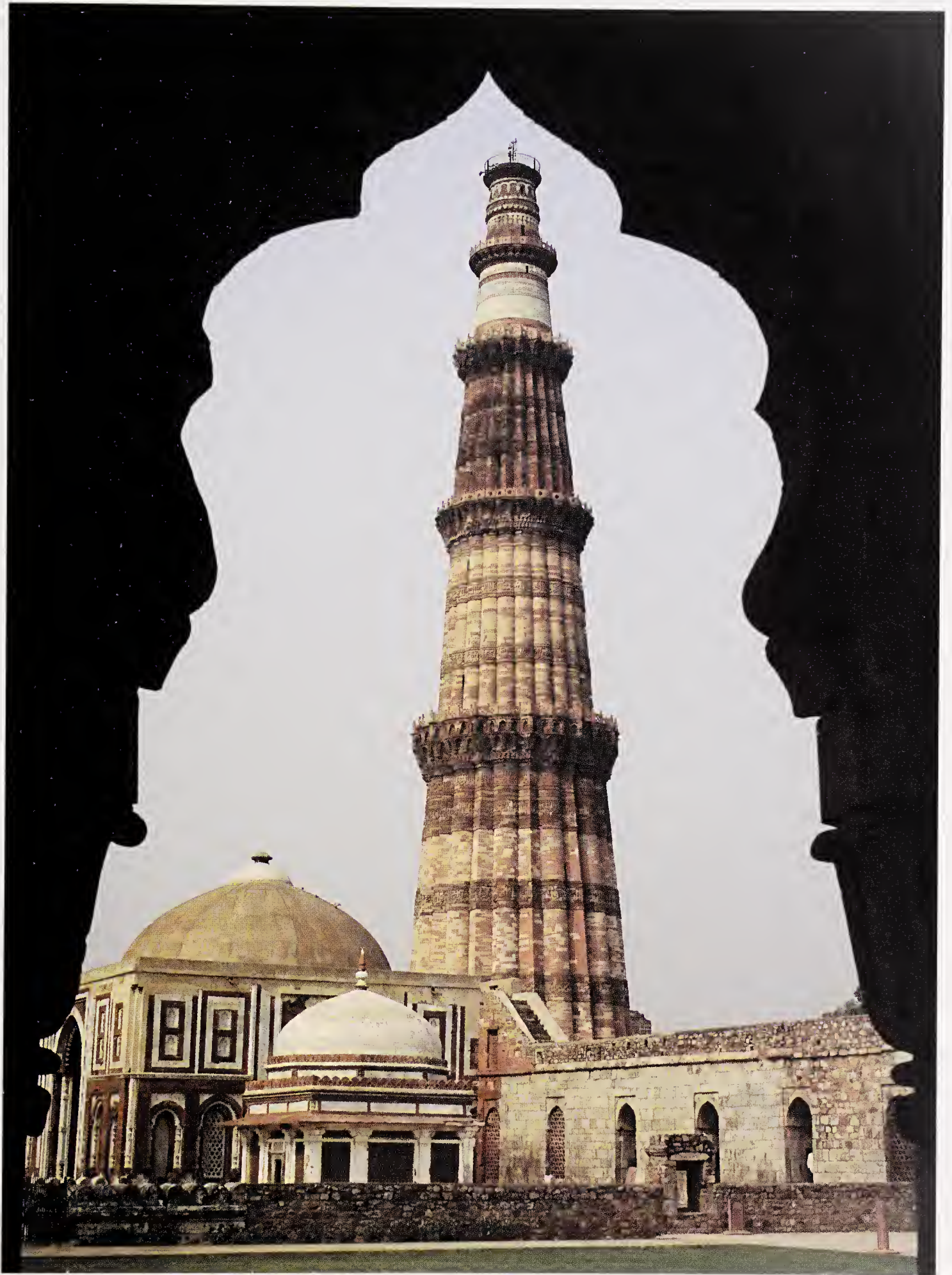
was close to Metcalfe House. The lengthy rampart was six km in circumference. One would need a magnified vision to visualize the enormity of those walls. As the entire topography has undergone a radical change due to expansion, the task of relating the past with the present can be best performed by taking a marathon walk well equipped with the relevant data.

However, the balcony of the higher level of the Qutb Minar (Pl. 18) is able to provide a panoramic view of the entire remains of Lal-Kot and Qila Rai Pithora. But the most enchanting view can be had from the massive ramparts of Lal-Kot which are still intact. The nearest landmark to Lal-Kot is Anang Tal and Alai Minar, which has survived intact (Pl. 19). An inn called Lado Sarai, though not very close to Qila Rai Pithora, does come within the enclosure of the rampart walls. The inn, with a vast enclosure of its own, suggests that the large caravans, of either traders or cross country visitors, sought refuge there. This vast area of the land is now being used as a golf course and is known as the Lado Sarai Golf Course.

Lal-Kot and Qila Rai Pithora forming complex of the first city of Delhi, had 27 Hindu and Jain temples. Several hundreds of carved pillars of these temples survived for a long period of time and were reused by the subsequent rulers (Pls. 20 a & b), the foremost example of it is the Quwwatul Islam mosque (Pl. 21).

Prithviraj, the Knight like hero of our tale, not only established the kingdom of Delhi, but also had something more to his credit; he put the history of Delhi on record. The history of Delhi emerged from the bardic and folklore depictions of people's life of those times. How did our knight-like hero live in those times? Was his life anything like the myths that surround his legend? Well, in a way as per the folklore, yes. Prithviraj grew up in times when he could create a world of his liking. His fame as a charming, handsome, brave, chivalrous Rajput prince had travelled far and wide. Samyukta, the charming princess of a neighbouring kingdom had heard about him, so fascinated was she by the tales of his valour, that she fell in love without ever having seen him. But in the true fairy tale tradition her father would have certainly penalized her, had she ever even mentioned his name. Prithviraj happened to be her father's rival in his plans of expansion. To avert trouble, he arranged a *svayamvara* where all the eligible princes were invited and the princess was given the freedom to choose her husband. Prithviraj was purposely left uninvited. His men were furious as they thought it was an insult to their king. Prithviraj called his chosen warriors and trusted men. They disquieted themselves as commoners and set off!

He rode his trusted steed and soon they reached the assembly of princes. As the princess walked around, Prithviraj



Pl. 18. Qutb Minar.



Pl. 19. A panoramic view of Alai Minar and the Qutb-complex : view from the top of Qutb Minar.





Pl. 20 a. A Hindu architectural pillar from Quwwatul Islam mosque.



Pl. 20 b. A Hindu architectural pillar from Quwwatul Islam mosque.



Pl. 21. Quwwatul Islam mosque.

astride his charger, swooped down, picked up Samyukta and rode away. His men took over and fought a battle to prevent their king from being followed. He married Samyukta and lived happily. In keeping with the times, Samyukta was only one of his wives. This was one of magnificence and prosperity tales of his victories, uncommon deeds of chivalry like those of King Arthur, the subject of endless folktales, but sadly enough, they proved to be a prelude to the final catastrophe, which brought the Rajput empire to an end.

Muhammad of Ghur invaded Delhi and Prithviraj fought bravely. Muhammad of Ghur was defeated in AD 1191 and Prithviraj pardoned him. But he was taken unaware by the invader during his second attack in AD 1192. It is said that he was so involved in his wife's love that he had started neglecting the affairs of the state. That neglect apparently led to the state of unpreparedness and his defeat. Also, the strategies and weaponry used by Muhammad of Ghur were superior which caused the downfall. There is some controversy about Prithviraj's death. The historians state that Prithviraj died in the battle of Thanesar in AD 1192. But bardic tradition has it otherwise. According to this version, Prithviraj was captured by deceit and taken to Gazing.

There are innumerable stories with which popular romantic legends are woven. An stream of folklore has continued to depict Prithviraj's victories

and the poignancy of his defeat. Many historians, too, have used these to depict his character.

Delhi has been the site of a succession of cities after Qila Rai Pithora. Each of the cities served as capital, citadel or centre of a vast domain. While the archeological remains convey some information about the past, it is finally the written material which matters the most as it preserves the knowledge, the memory of the past achievements and failures and the process of evolutions. It is the tales and romances that make the past live again.

The second city of Delhi, named Siri by one of its rulers, Alauddin Khalji, was also called the abode of the Caliphate. After the dramatic defeat of Prithviraj Chauhan, the rule of that dynasty had come to an end and there had begun an era of Muslim Rule. Qutbud-Din Aibak, the slave commander of Muhammad of Ghur, had been able to capture Delhi after several battles. This marked the beginning of the Delhi Sultanate and the Islamic dynasty prevailed for the next 600 years.

Lahore in Punjab, Pakistan had been the capital and also the administrative centre of the Muslim rulers till the city of Lal-Kot and Qila Rai Pithora was won and made capital.

Aibak, who had made his Turkish slave Iltutmish his lieutenant at Budaon, seized power in a coup in Delhi, and

occupied the freshly conquered Rajput kingdom. After Aibak's death, Iltutmish became the sole supporter of Islam in the subcontinent. The empire extended farther than what it was at Aibak's times, thus necessitating the shift of the centre of administration from Lahore to Delhi. Iltutmish successfully carried out the task of establishing his rule at Delhi. It flourished as a centre of learning and culture. A number of medieval buildings dating to that time still exist.

Iltutmish knew the inability and worthlessness of his son, therefore had groomed his daughter Razia as his successor. He had full confidence in Razia's ability to rule. Razia who ascended the throne after her father's death discarded the purdah (veil) and proved her mettle as a ruler. But the orthodox Amirs could not tolerate a woman ruler, hence the reign of the first woman ruler of Delhi, met an abrupt end.

The Mongol invasions were becoming frequent, even during Iltutmish's time. To avoid constant encounters, Iltutmish had taken a decision to actively encourage Mongol fugitives to settle in Delhi. This, in turn, caused a tremendous increase in population. Moroccan traveller, Ibn Batuta, spent about ten years in Delhi leaving a good account of Delhi's length, breadth and population, comparing it with Cairo and Baghdad.

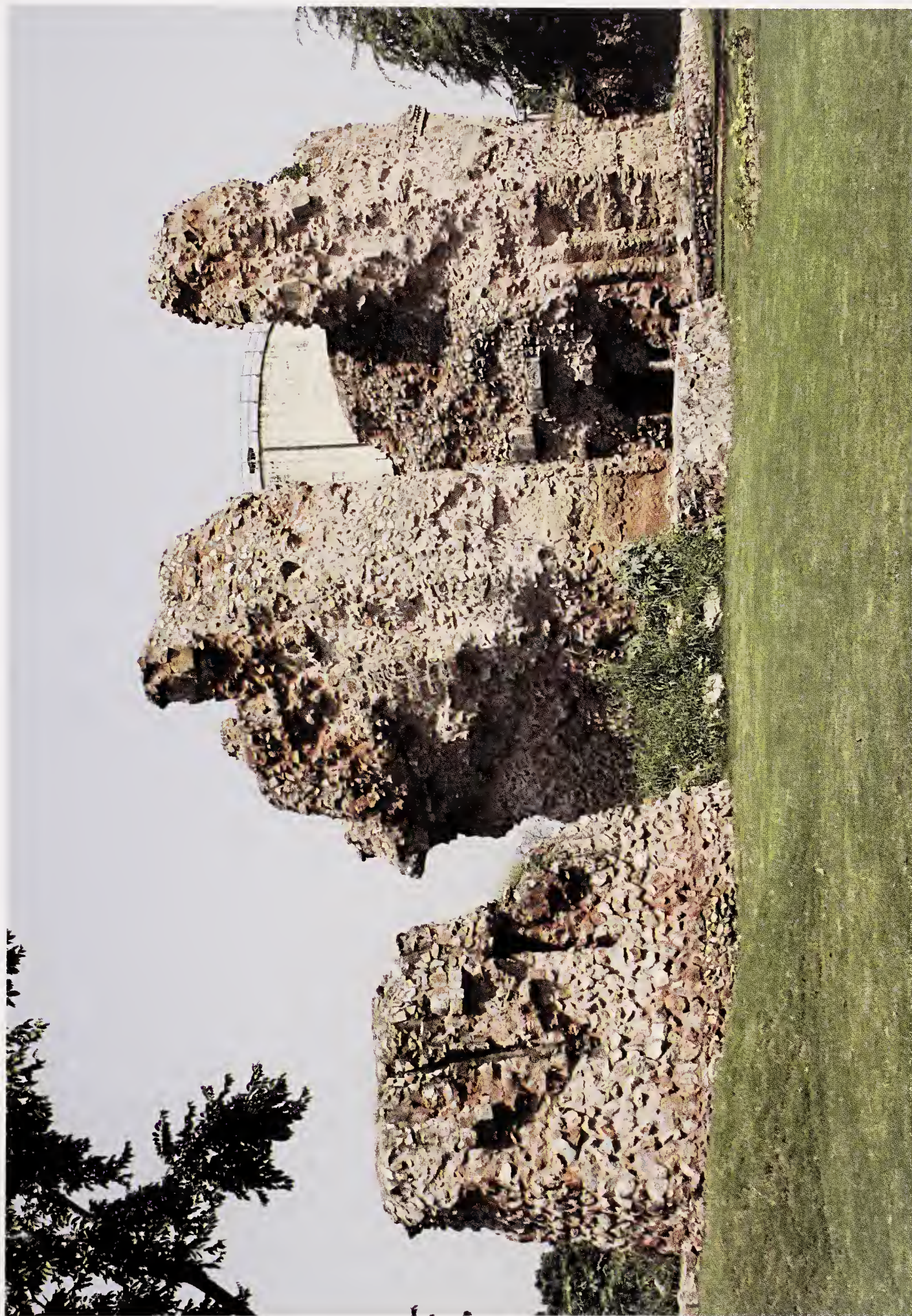
Having dealt with the Mongols effectively, the new ruler Alauddin Khalji decided to construct a strong fort on

the plain of Siri. Besides the factor of security, the increase in population was also a reason behind the consideration of erection of a new city with a formidable defence.

However, the prestige of being the ceremonial capital still belonged to Qila Rai Pithora. When the new Sultan Alauddin Khalji became the ruler, he was not yet very confident of his position. He, therefore, lived at Qila Rai Pithora initially, as it was considered more secure. The plain of Siri was mainly used for military needs. With repeated Mongol invasions, Alauddin had been compelled to entrench his army, with its large numbers of mounted armed guards and elephants with fully armed men, on the Siri plain. To strengthen security, he had also built blocks of houses and constructed other fortifications to prevent the enemy from forcing their way in.

Siri has been authentically identified with Shahpur (Pls. 22, 23 and 24). Alexander Cunningham found satisfactory evidence to support his view regarding the identification of Siri with Shahpur. It now appears on the survey sheets as well.

According to Amir Khusraw, the left wing of the Kaikubad's army in the battle of AD 1367 was encamped at Indrapat, the centre wing at Siri and the right wing at Tilpat. Siri was, therefore, just half way between Indrapat and Tilpat, which corresponds exactly with the position of Shahpur.



Pl. 22. Siri Fort, Existing remains.



Pl. 23. A general view of a bastion of Siri Fort.



Pl. 24. Ruins of Siri Fort wall.

According to Barni, the Sultan, after defeating his enemy, built a strong palace at Siri and consolidated his position there, abandoning further military campaigns. As per the Barni's version, in spite of such perfect arrangements, Alauddin once had to face a very critical situation. He had encamped at Siri. The Mongols came and surrounded him from every side. Their force was much larger and as the siege was on, the army's supplies ran out. The defenseless people had nothing to do except pray. Their prayers were answered miraculously. After two long months, the enemy felt that they could not win and so lifted the siege. One of the Sultan's teachers, who is said to have attained great spiritual powers, is believed to have prayed for the safety and protection of the Sultan as well as his subjects, and it was to his prayer that the miraculous change in the thinking of Mongols is attributed.

The influx of population had spilled over into the suburbs. The invaders used to plunder the defenseless population, which made the construction of a fortification wall absolutely imperative. The city of Siri has been described as a round city. The extensive fortification walls surrounding the city connected it with the old capital of Qila Rai Pithora. The long fortification wall was built of stone and mortar. Siri had seven gates, four of which opened towards outside and three towards inside. To strengthen the security arrangements further,

the Sultan had placed guards outside the ramparts. Notable among the constructions was a hall of thousand pillars at the Sultan's palace. Each pillar was ornamented with carvings and the hall was an architectural marvel, the fame of which spread far and wide.

After constructing the city and his palace at Siri, Alauddin had the remainder of the city restored and repaired. He even had many more fortresses constructed at vulnerable points. He appointed brave and experienced commanders at all these fortresses. He had granaries constructed so as to ensure adequate reserves of food and fodder.

Well qualified and able engineers were entrusted the task of getting arms and ammunitions manufactured. Surrounded by strong and extensive fortification wall, the city of Siri soon developed into an active town with flourishing markets, buildings and palaces. Curiously, a place with thousand pillars, of a similar description or name was also built by Muhammad-bin-Tughluq. However, it was Alauddin's palace, which was more widely known of the two. Besides, Alauddin built many buildings, which brought him popularity because they were well known for their structural excellence. Some of them have survived undamaged. The Alai Minar and Alai Darwaza are two such examples.

The Alai Darwaza, or gate (Pls. 25 & 26), was constructed in 1310 and is the entrance to a mosque. The gate was enlarged by the Sultan. The steps to this gate are on the side of a shallow ravine, which has become much silted up. The restoration work in 1828 could not match the workmanship of the Sultan's time and has spoilt the original effect. However, the interior has remained unaffected, although the sandstone keeps flaking with the passage of time.

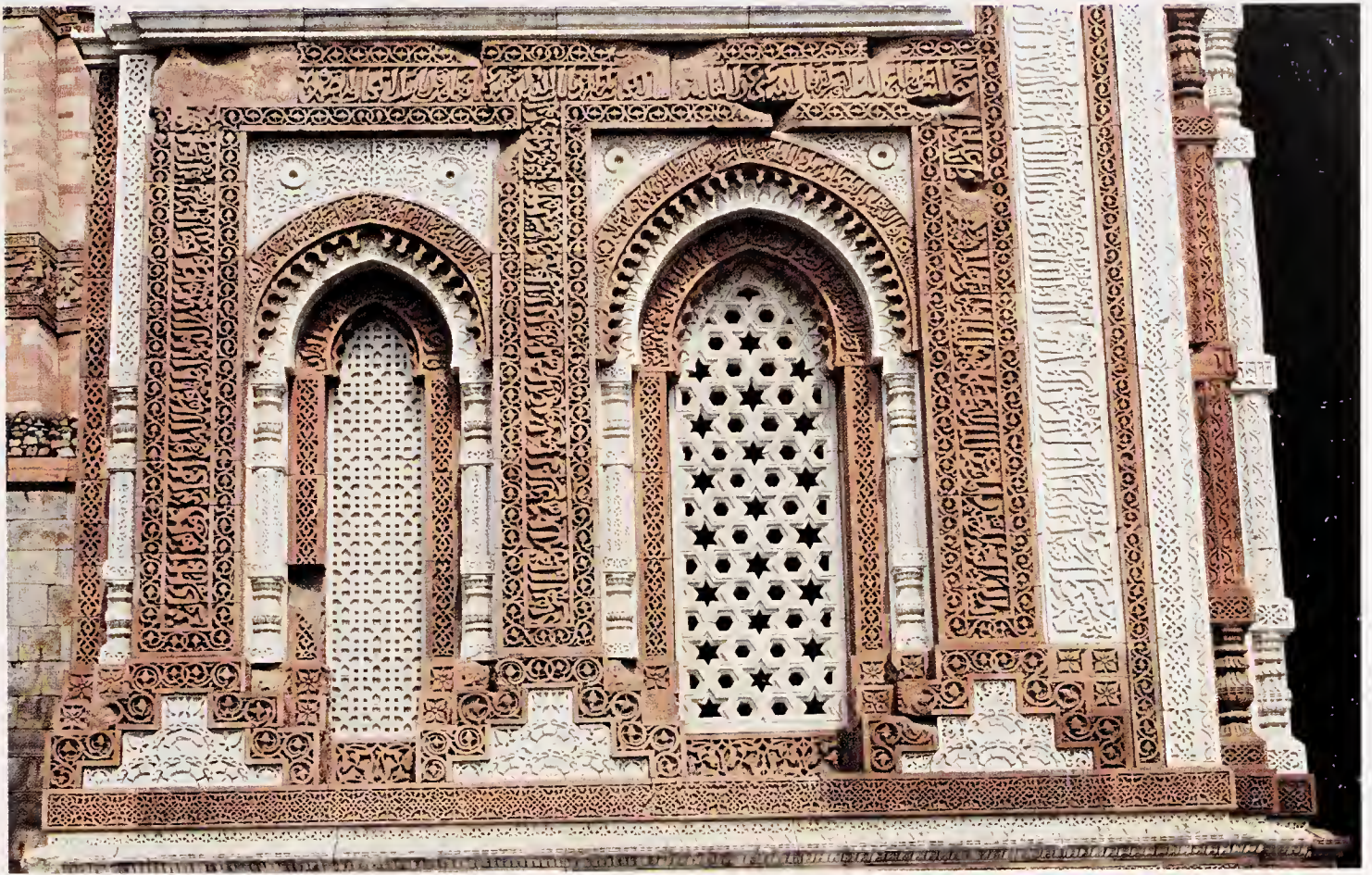
The Alai Minar (Pl. 27) is to the north of the tomb of Iltutmish. There remains only the crumbling ruins of this unfinished minaret, which was designed

to be a companion to the famous Qutb Minar. It was intended to be double the measure of the Qutb Minar in both diameter and height.

Even when the Sultan's construction activity was at its peak, he was not oblivious to the day-to-day problems of his subjects. He was quick to realize, that the confined area of the old city was getting increasingly congested and that people needed more space. His attention, therefore, shifted to the Qutb area where a vast open field awaited. So, under his direction, an active town sprang up. This mini city flourished with markets, buildings, and all the necessary amenities and was described



Pl. 25. Alai Darwaza, Qutb-complex.



Pl. 26. Close-up view of Alai Darwaza.



Pl. 27. Alai Minar, Qutb-complex.

by some chroniclers as a *shahr* par excellence.

The next trouble which caught his attention was the acute shortage of water. Because of it being a rocky terrain it was much more difficult to get water here, than it was in the alluvial soil of Siri. Alauddin tried to remedy this situation by re-excavating the Hauz-e-Sultani or Hauz-i-Shamshi, which had run dry. The accumulated silt and mud was removed and the tank cleaned. A platform was constructed in the middle and the tank filled with water. But this Hauz-i-Shamshi was a good distance away from where much of the population lived. Alauddin therefore, had another

tank dug at a distance of two and a half kilometers from the Qutb. This huge tank was square, with each side measuring about 600 meters in length. The total area covered by the tank was about 70 acres. The Sultan named it Hauz-i-Alai or Hauz-i-Khas (Pls. 28 & 29). Hauz-Khas is a name very familiar to Delhites today. The banks of the tank are still seen.

This vast tank must have looked like a mini sea, as Yazdi, one of the earlier chroniclers described the tank as Daryachi, which means a mini sea. Amir Khusraw used plenty of exaggeration to describe this tank, the waters of which he compared to the waters of the rivers



Pl. 28. Hauz-Khas, Delhi



Pl. 29. Another view of Hauz-Khas, Delhi.

Nile and Euphrates. This tank was extensively repaired by a later ruler, Sultan Firuz. This reservoir, which once used to have enough water to meet the requirements of the entire population of the time is today totally dry, though the stone steps built by Firuz Shah are still intact. The tank used to get filled up during the rainy season and supplied water to the inhabitants of Delhi throughout the year. It is really amazing to know that its catchment area was so vast that it sprawled to the south, behind the present Indian Institute of Technology and Jawaharlal Nehru University. Some of the channels, which carried water to the tank, are still traceable.

It was at some distance from the more densely inhabited areas and had vacant land adjoining it, which separated and positioned the tank on one side and Siri on the other. The vacant area was very thoughtfully beautified by Khusraw Khan, who planted orchards there. Female singers and dancers were invited to come and live on the other side. Since it wasn't easy to carry water from the tank to the residences, men and women labourers were deployed for the houses of the nobility. The major part of Delhi, under Khalji, retained the Qutb-Delhi and Siri within its walls.

Having dealt with the immediate problems, Alauddin's thoughts turned again to expansion and pleasure.

According to popular legend, he had heard much about the beauty of Rani Padmini, the wife of Rana Ratan Singh of Chittor. He thought that by capturing Chittor, he would automatically obtain Padmini, the cherished beauty of his dreams. He consulted with his generals and ordered the march.

Alauddin laid siege and sent a word to the Maharaja that he could be spared battle on one condition, and that was the surrender of his queen Padmini. Though the message was worded in a most friendly and polite way, the Rana obviously took it as an affront. He replied that the Sultan would not get anything without a battle. The inevitable fight ensued. The Rajputs fought bravely and gave the Sultan a taste of a real tough war. That made the Sultan ponder deeply over the whole matter. He thought that he could probably win the battle but what of Padmini? He had heard of the custom of Johar, when the menfolk died in the war, their wives prepared a huge funeral pyre and burnt themselves alive. Alauddin decided to change his strategy. He sent his messenger again, as ruinous attack was not what he had aimed at. It was Padmini, whom he desired and Chittor, though of great strategic importance, had become secondary. In his second message he said that although he was fascinated with Padmini's irresistible charm, he was content if the Rana agreed to let him see a mere reflection of her in a mirror. He would even consider lifting

the siege and retreat. The king, Rana Ratan Singh, was a direct descendant of the great Bappa Rawal whose name is immortalized in the annals of Rajasthan for his unrivalled valour. Besides, he was the ruler of Chittor, one of the most prestigious and strategically important kingdoms, and he commanded great power. He was a brave king and like a true Rajput, the Rana agreed to the Sultan's suggestion. As an honourable Rajput he trusted the Sultan. He sent words that the Sultan was welcome as a friend and the Rana would not mind letting him get a glimpse of his wife. The Sultan arrived with great fanfare. Alauddin was taken to the residential-palace. A leaf size mirror was placed in the private hall at such an angle, that if Padmini stood in her room, her reflection could be mirrored in full. The Sultan was spellbound. The reflection, even from a distance was captivating enough to mesmerize him, but he had to turn back and leave. With all due courtesy, the Rana accompanied him up to his camp. Alauddin suddenly turned treacherous. He found this an easy opportunity to capture the Rana. He beckoned to his bodyguard, who swiftly overpowered the Rana, tied and carried him to the Sultan's camp.

Taking Padmini to be defenseless and the fort without guard, the Sultan asked her to surrender. Though the treachery was unprecedented, Padmini was not a mindless puppet. She conferred with her brave and trusted warriors and decided

to meet guile with guile. She sent a message, too, saying she would go most willingly only if she was allowed to see her husband once. Alauddin, pleased beyond expectation, granted his permission. Padmini ordered two hundred palanquins to be decked and ready and informed the Sultan that she would come with all her maids and friends.

The palanquins were ready, but inside sat her choicest and bravest warriors. She was received with great pomp and honour. Her bedecked chamber awaited her, but she had to meet her husband first. She chose to take only four palanquins to accompany her. She met her husband and requested him to get into one of the palanquins in which she was sitting the most trusted and bravest of her warriors. The Rana had no option but to accept her suggestion. His commanders had already arranged to get the back exit opened, where awaited the mounted guards and an army. Padmini herself was a good fighter. They both mounted and sped away accompanied and guarded by their soldiers. They reached their fort safely. The Sultan and his men came to know of this deceit rather late. Thereafter a fierce battle took place, but Alauddin had to return to Delhi without Padmini.

Though Siri remained the second city in the link, it maintained its strategic importance. After a long passage of time, the name has come to fore again with the coming up of an auditorium

named the Siri Fort auditorium. Many cultural programmes, events, shows etc. are held here.

Alauddin Khalji gave patronage to the scholars, poets and artists. During his time, Siri was a great centre of such men. Notable philosophers and poets of his reign included Mir Hassan and Amir Khusraw. Amir Khusraw was considered the prince of poets, and his works, while steeped in spiritual wisdom, were expressed in a language easily comprehensible to the common people.

It was for the first time that an efficient postal system was developed in this kingdom. To carry the letters either horse-riders or probably mail coaches were used. Alauddin also took another wise step by regulating the prices of commodities. In Alauddin's reign, the city of Delhi was not only the political capital but also the main commercial and cultural centre. The great saint Nizamuddin also lived in those times. Besides all this, the older Delhi of the Chauhans was also taken care of and flourished.

Nothing has remained of the city of Siri, not even the walls, as much of the material was used by Sher Shah to construct the walls of his city. Unfortunately, no traces are left even of the famous palace of thousand pillars. Whatever crumbling ruins survived, have now become a part of the village of Shahpur. The only monument associated with that city and that monarch, which

has survived, is found in the remains of Hauz Khas where the Hauz Khas village market-complex has now been developed. It claims to be a popular shopping centre because it combines old world charm with modernity. Most of the posh shops and boutiques are housed in old mansions and dwellings of the nobles thus attracting the modern crowd. But the city has gone into oblivion.

The downfall of the Khaljis in the first quarter of the fourteenth century ushered in the Tughluq dynasty. R.E. Frykenberg, who has written about the development of Delhi, aptly observed that the nomenclature was applied universally to the original city of Lal-Kot, Qila Rai Pithora as well as to the cities, or the entire complex of townships that came up in the later years. Every ambitious invader's ultimate aim always was to capture and rule over Delhi. Irrespective of the place they came from or the route they took, each one of them sought Delhi.

Ghiyathuddin Tughluq, the founder of the city of Tughluqabad, began his life as a slave. He was brought from Khorasan to Alauddin's court. Alauddin, having observed him for some time, noticed his capabilities as an administrator and army commander and appointed him the governor of Dipalpur and Lahore, the two places which were in need of a strong hand. Ghiyathuddin visited Delhi often to report important matters to the Sultan, who had begun to rely

on him for advice and took him along wherever he went.

It was customary for the Sultan to go around the city unannounced, as he liked to check the state of the things personally. Once, at the end of his tour of the city, he decided to step outside the boundaries of the town where he could enjoy wilderness and forget the affairs of the state for a while. Ghiyathuddin who had accompanied the Sultan was quick to discern his liking for the freshness of the open surroundings. He sensed that the hilly terrain had charmed the Sultan. Like a shrewd and able administrator, he promptly came up with a suggestion to build a city on the table land. The Sultan is said to have replied, "build it when you are the Sultan." His words proved prophetic. Alauddin's reign was not a very long one and he died of dropsy in AD 1316.

Ghiyathuddin succeeded Alauddin and chose to build a city on that table land. It was not because he wanted to honour the wish of his master but because it happened to be a force of circumstance in some ways. Invasions into the country were so common that it was considered safer to construct a fort and a township on a table land. This land which was about five kilometers away from the earlier city of Lal-Kot and Qila Rai Pithora was finalized as the site for the new city of Tughluqabad.

Although the glory of Alauddin's empire was reflected in building

activities and the city of Siri bore a living testimony to such activities, there were no worthy successors to him. His six year old son was seated on the throne by Malik Kafur who was a general of Sultan Alauddin. Two of his elder sons were blinded and hence rendered unfit to rule. The fourth son called Qutbuddin Mubarak blinded the infant brother to usurp the throne. The usurper was very lustful, cruel and totally devoid of any qualities of statesmanship or strength of character. A period of five years was all that he could manage to get. He was murdered by one of his favourite friends, Khusraw Khan.

But the Turks were fully united in their determination not to let the throne of Delhi slip out of their hands. Tughluq Ghazi Malik who had been a capable general and had routed many marches earlier, searched for the descendants of Alauddin but when he failed to find any, he himself ascended the throne, a decision which was approved unanimously. He claimed himself emperor, assumed the name of Ghiyathuddin Tughlaq and laid the foundations of Tughluqabad. Khusrau Khan who had succeeded Alauddin briefly, remained the sweeper king because his inefficient administration could only generate revolt which was caused by his policies. The effort to quell it brought about his end. This ushered in the Tughluq dynasty in AD 1321. The Tughluq dynasty was a continuation of the earlier dynasty in many ways.

The ruins of the fort of Tughluqabad being massive in structure (Pls. 30, 31 & 32), easily caught the attention of the traveller. Capt. Harcourt's description of the fort disclosed many features besides describing the structure. He said "this almost cyclopean group of buildings, recalling of the painter Martin's grand architectural dreams, was built early in the fourteenth century by Tughluq Ghazi Malik, a successful military adventurer who overthrew the house of Khalji and ascended the imperial throne at that epoch".

General Alexander Cunningham, the well known archaeologist, gave an animated account of the fort as he saw it long time after Capt. Harcourt. Nothing much has changed substantially since then except that the maintenance has now been taken over by the Archaeological Survey of India and the upkeep of the building and the garden has improved. It should however be interesting to have a look at the fort with the archaeologist. According to the General Cunningham's account: "The fort of Tughluqabad may be described with tolerable accuracy as a half hexagon in shape, with three acres or rather more than three quarters of a mile of length each, and a base of one mile and a half, the whole circuit being only one furlong less than four miles. The fort stands on a rocky height and is built of massive blocks of stones so large and heavy that they must have been quarried on the spot." The largest stone

that he observed measured fourteen feet in length by two feet two inches and one foot ten inches in breadth and thickness respectively and must have weighed rather more than six tones. "The short faces to the north, west and east are protected by a deep ditch, and the long face to the south by a large sheet of water which is held up by an embankment (though there is no water now) on the south-east corner. On this side the rock is scraped, and above it the main wall rises to a mean height of forty feet with a parapet of seven feet, behind which rises another wall of fifteen feet, the whole height above the low ground being upward of nineteen feet. In the south-west angle is the citadel which occupies about one sixth of the area of the fort and contains the ruins of an extensive palace. The ramparts are raised as assail, on a line of domed rooms, which rarely communicated with each other and which 'no doubt' were quarters of the troops that garrisoned the fort. The walls rapidly turn inwards as those of Egyptian buildings. The rampart walls are pierced with loopholes to give way to light and air. The parapets that command the foot of the walls are crowned with a line of crude battlement of solid stones having loopholes. The walls are built of large plain dressed stones and there is no ornamentation of any kind; but the vast size, the great strength and the visible solidity on the whole, give Tughluqabad an air of stern and massive grandeur that is both striking and impressive. The fort



Pl. 30. Tughluqabad Fort.



Pl. 31. A view of Tughluqabad Fort.



Pl. 32. Rampart wall, Tughluqabad Fort.

of Tughluqabad contains seven tanks of water besides the ruins of several large buildings such as the Jama Masjid and the Bijai Mandal.”

The tanks mentioned in Cunningham’s account no longer exist. The area occupied by the fort is almost equal to that of Shahjahanabad, and the interior is an open plain, eight km in circumference. There is little to see inside the fort except a well which is unique in the sense that it has been cut from solid rock and goes to a depth of 80 feet, quite an achievement for those times. The other notable structure is the ruin of Tughluq’s palace. The tomb of the Sultan is perhaps the only structure which has wholly survived (Pls. 33, 34 & 35). Mr. Fergusson has recorded in his remarks on this grand relic: “When the stern old warrior Tughluq Shah founded this new city of Delhi, which still bears

his name, he built himself a tomb, not in a garden as was usually the case, but in a strongly fortified citadel in the middle of an artificial lake. The sloping walls and almost Egyptian solidity of this mausoleum, combined with bold and massive towers of the fortification that surrounds it, form a picture of a warrior’s tomb unrivalled anywhere, and a singular contrast to the elegant and luxurious garden tombs of the more settled and peaceful dynasties that succeeded.”

At present, within the walls, the main city lies in total desolation. As one enters within the sloping walls of the fort, one finds the remains of the palace on the left and the inner citadel on the right. The desolation stands as an unfailing reminder of an incident which caused a life-long rift between the Sultan and his teacher saint.



Pl. 33. Tomb of Ghiyathuddin Tughluq with outer fortification.





Pl. 34. Tomb of Ghiyathuddin Tughluq.





Pl. 35. Entrance arch of Ghiyathuddin Tughluq's Tomb



Pl. 36. Graves of Ghiyathuddin Tughluq and his relatives.

It is stated that while the Sultan began building the city and his palace at Tughluqabad, his religious teacher Saint Nizamuddin Auliya (Pls. 37 a & b) was intent on constructing a step-well (Pl. 38) as an act of piety to provide water to the public. The Sultan, in a haste to complete the construction of the fort, asked the saint to suspend work on the well. But the Saint was adamant. His behavior enraged the king. Forgetting all etiquette and respect, the Sultan forbade all the masons from working for the Saint. The Saint, who was held in high regard and believed to possess miraculous powers, called the masons and asked them to work for him at night. The masons agreed to abide by his orders. The work proceeded unhampered. The Sultan further issued

orders that no oil should be allowed to the Saint, to light the lamps with. The Saint laughed and told his workers not to worry but to return at night. Familiar with the Saint's powers, the masons came to work. The Saint took some water and told them to use it as a substitute of oil. Though bewildered, the workers took the water, poured it into the lamps and lighted them. To their utter amazement, not only did the lamps burn, but they burnt brighter than ever! His step-well was completed much before the city or the palace.

This seemed a total outrage and the Sultan took it as an affront and a threat to his power. He ordered the Saint to leave the city of Tughluqabad. The Saint accepted the decree but his patience



Pl. 37 a. Dargah of Nizamuddin Auliya.



Pl. 37 b. Another view of Nizamuddin Dargah.



Pl. 38. Nizamuddin's step-well.

too had come to an end. Before he left, he cursed that the city of Tughluqabad would meet its end soon and would be inhabited only either by jackals or Jats (a tribe of Punjab and Rajasthan). His prediction turned into reality and came true very soon. Tughluq Shah reigned only for a short while. The city was deserted soon because of acute water problem.

The reign of Ghiyathuddin Tughluq was marked by reduction in law and order and threats of constant invasions. Ghiyathuddin, to start with, was fully occupied in restoring law and order given the chaotic situation at the time he took over from his predecessor. Having dealt with revolts in the south and east and restoring the lost sense of security to his

subjects, he next turned his attention to his great mission of constructing the fort. This land was about eight kilometers east of the Qutb Minar. The River Yamuna, which has now changed its course vastly, then presented a lovely sight as it lapped the rampart walls on one side of the fort.

Besides the consideration of safety and a bit of the Sultan's fancy, there was one more reason behind contemplating yet another city owing to overcrowding of the existing city. The foundation for the city of Tughluqabad was thus justified. The city had a circumference of about 6.5 kilometers with massive slopping bastion walls, a style specially chosen by Ghiyathuddin in appreciation of the

leaning walls of Egypt. The proximity of the stone quarries not only proved to be an added advantage, but also allowed the profuse use of stones in the construction. Stone chips were also used, to reinforce the elevation of the fortification. The river Yamuna, flowing along one side, lent credence to the idea of constructing a dam as water had always been in short supply in Delhi.

The citadel with three gates had underground chambers and passages connecting them with the old city. The Sultan erected many strange and incomprehensible buildings in a style of architecture that was quite distinct from the designs of that time.

The entire town was composed of enormous masses of sandstone. The relics of palaces and baths, which are still intact make us wonder if the inhabitants were gigantic too! Some of the underground apartments were quite extensive and exceedingly strange in their structure. The roofs, composed of huge slabs of granite were so wedged together that they supported each other by their inward pressure. Unfortunately, Tughluqabad lacked the most indispensable commodity for life, water. Since it was built on a rocky terrain, there was acute shortage of water. The reservoirs could store only limited quantity of water to meet emergency requirements. Wells had to be dug very deep to reach the water level and it was an arduous task hardly achievable by

the common people. This was one of the main reasons why the people largely preferred to stay behind on the plains, where wells and tanks could be dug easily to provide water.

Tughluqabad seemed to be more or less a detached complex for the Sultan's residence and for his personal retinue and troops. In all probability, it was not intended to be a complete city to replace the 'old' city of Delhi on commercial or administrative levels. The city today stands in ruins, awaiting further probe.

The small fort with Egyptian style leaning walls is in ruins. But the city walls are intact at many places, because they were built with rock support on a solid base of rocks. Long ago when the River Yamuna on the east side was a vast stretch of water, its grandeur and charm would have countered the grimness of the dark grey and red walls of the fort.

The lofty gateway and triple-storied tower with the remaining ramparts look impressive even today. The description of the Sultan's court as given by Ibn Batuta gives interesting glimpses of that time. "On all the thirteen gates were ushers of different status. At the gate which led to the main audience hall stood the chief usher for introducing the visitor to the chief minister who took care of the visitor. It was only after crossing the third gate that one could enter the vast grandeur of the hall of thousand pillars and have an audience with the Sultan."

Sultan Ghiyathuddin, according to most accounts, was murdered by his son Muhammad-bin-Tughluq. Saint Nizamuddin, whom the Sultan had offended when he was constructing the city of Tughluqabad is said to have been a party to the plot. Ibn Batuta, who had spent a long time in Delhi during the Sultanate period had been an eye witness to many of the events and took interest in recording them. His narrative claims to be the first-hand account of the whole scene. He said, "There was then Delhi's Saint Nizamuddin Badauni. Muhammad, the Sultan's son, visited him to pay him respect in the eyes of his followers and to implore his prayers. The Saint was subject to ecstatic fits in which he lost all control of himself. The Sultan's son directed his servants to let him know when the Saint was in one of his fits. When he was seized with a fit, the prince was informed, and he went to him. As soon as the Saint saw him, he exclaimed, 'We give him the throne'.

Batuta continues, "The Sultan was informed that the astrologer had predicted that he would never again enter the city of Delhi on returning from his expedition. So when he reached near his capital on his return from the expedition, he ordered his son to build him a palace or a 'Khushk' along a running river near a place called Afghanpur. Muhammad built the palace in the course of just three days, making it chiefly of wood. It was elevated above the ground and rested on pillars of wood. Muhammad planned it scientifically. The

objective which was kept in view while building the Khushk was that it should fall down with a crash when the elephant's body hit or even touched a specially built weak section. The Sultan stopped at the building and feasted. His son sought permission to parade elephants before him. The Sultan consented. The Sultan's favorite son Mahmud was with him. Thereupon, they brought the elephants up on side as the prince had arranged. When the animals passed along that side, the building fell down upon the Sultan and his son Mahmud."

Ghiyathuddin was buried outside his new city, in the tomb which he had constructed during his lifetime. Tughluq's tomb is within an enclosure. It is just as massive as all the other buildings of that time. Though plain, it impresses the visitor in some ways. The monotony of the red sandstone is carefully broken by bands of marble. The slope, a feature which had become the hallmark of Tughluq era, persists in the structure of the tomb as well. The walls of the tomb are eleven feet in thickness at the base and only four feet thick at the top. The interior is plain. There are three graves inside, the Sultan's, his wife's and his son, Mahmud's (see Pls. 33-35).

Though Ghiyathuddin Tughluq reigned for a short period, he tried his best to restore order in Delhi and gave a fair measure of peace and comfort to his subjects. He took all protective measures

to guard against the constant Mongol invasions. In his efforts to restore the Deccan province, he had sent his son Jana to deal with the rebels twice and finally had succeeded in recapturing Bidar. He himself in his expedition to Bengal had marched up to Sundargaon, near Dacca, and on his return annexed Tirkut. Had he survived, he could perhaps have proved to be a successful ruler. The city of Tughluqabad seemed to have truly been affected by the curse of Saint Nizamuddin and ended as a cursed city.

Ghiyathuddin's most important work in Delhi was the addition of a new city of Tughlaqabad. Today it lies deserted, the enormity of its constructions being the only factor drawing attention. After the death of Ghiyathuddin, his son Muhammad-bin-Tughluq succeeded him but never felt very comfortable in Tughluqabad mainly because of the shortage of water and it being an accursed city. The period of his stay at Tughluqabad for seven years is a subject of controversy.

The water of Tughlaqabad was brackish and in short supply and the heat was intense. These two factors made life difficult. Coupled with the diminishing threats of Mongol invasions, the way was opened for construction of the fourth city of Delhi.

Muhammad-bin-Tughluq abandoned Tughluqabad in AD 1327, and shifted to the outlying fort of Adilabad on a hill to the south of Tughluqabad but problems dogged him there too. The Sultan then

was constrained to plan another city which was to enclose the entire area between Qutb, Delhi and Siri, to be a part of Jahanpanah. Describing the extensive enclosure, a chronicler of that time Yazdi has observed that the enclosing wall built by Muhammad exceeded all the earlier ones in length.

Muhammad-bin-Tughluq named this city 'Jahanpanah' which means the asylum of the world, a tall claim indeed! However, the name acquired much significance, as far as the people of Delhi were concerned. Though the Mongol threat had diminished, the public felt far from secure. The suburbs of Delhi were rendered unsafe because of regular intrusions of the Mewati Rajputs from the neighbouring state of Rajasthan. They came on the pretext of drawing water from the large tanks and wells, which they did so without formal permission. They robbed, plundered and even abducted women and escaped unpunished. Times rendered the suburbs of Delhi, Qila Rai Pithora and Siri increasingly unsafe. The enclosing walls of Jahanpanah provided much needed security and boosted the morale of the populace (Pl. 39). It certainly gave them the feeling of having found asylum, a place of security.

Within the enclosure, the Sultan had a royal palace and mosque constructed. In their efforts to discover and protect these monuments, the officers of the Archaeological Survey of India have in

the recent past searched for the mosque and the palace. The mosque when cleared of the surrounding vestiges emerged as an edifice of good proportions. The style of construction, of course was predominantly Tughluq. The discovery of the remains of the royal palace nearby was another important find. This palace is generally referred to as the Bijai Mandal (Pls. 40 & 41) which is a name used and reused in other contexts too.

Within the precincts of the palace, a big hall was clearly located. This hall, in the beginning was mistaken for the hall of thousand pillars, the one built by Alauddin. But, later on, it was correctly identified as the hall of public audience. Some of the private apartments were also traced. Within the palace was a tower from where the Sultan reviewed his troops.



Pl. 39. A courtyard of Jahanpanah.

Excavations in 1931 revealed some treasure chambers in which were found some gold coins from South India, acquired during Sultan Alauddin's reign. These were the first South Indian coins found in North India. In the layout of the palace were discovered the foundations of the Royal Bath and the Zenana (the ladies) chambers visible on the west side of the main building. An elephant track was traceable to the north of the hall of private audience. The eastern wall of Jahanpanah is still traceable. Between this and Tughluqabad lay a lake, some of the sluice gates of which are still identifiable.

The city of Delhi then stretched from Qutb to about five kilometers to the north, consisting of three parts, Lal-Kot, Siri and Jahanpanah. On the western side lay the great tank of Hauz-i-Khas, meant for exclusive use of the royalty and men of consequence. On the east, there existed yet another lake, which covered the plains between Jahanpanah and Tughluqabad. To the south lay the stretch of rocky terrain which the nobles must have used for their sports. The space to the north, presented a pleasant view as it was well adorned by lovely gardens, amidst which stand the houses and mansions inhabited by the nobles. In between rose the white dome of the mosque aspiring to touch the sky. All in all it was pleasant indeed. The glistening waters of the interspersing lakes and the hustle and bustle of the happy citizens completed the picture of a prosperous metropolis.



Pl. 40. Bijai Mandal.



Pl. 41. Bijai Mandal - stepped arch.

The mosque has no wood in it at all. It has thirteen domes and four courts. In the centre of the mosque is an awe-inspiring column and nobody knows of what metal it is constructed. According to one learned man it is called Haft Tush, which means 'seven metals' and is constructed from these seven. Apart from the majesty of these columns of finer quality, the city of Delhi, as mentioned by Moroccan traveller Ibn Batuta had never before been so vast in expanse and of such magnificence as in the time of Muhammad-bin-Tughluq. Ibn Batuta, who visited Delhi in 1334-42, has given a vivid and interesting account of the kingdom. He has described the Sultan as Muhammad Shah which had been done by few others as well. Batuta speaks highly about the mosque. He says, "The cathedral mosque occupies a large area; its walls, roof and paving are all constructed of white stones admirably squared and firmly cemented with lead breadth; it had been polished and given a brilliant gleam which makes no impression on it. It is thirty cubits high and well rolled all along a turn around it and the portion which encircled it measured eight cubits. On the eastern gate, there are two enormous idols of brass, prostrate on the ground and held by stones and everyone entering or leaving the mosque treads on them. The site was formerly occupied by an idol temple and was converted into a mosque on the conquest of the city. In the northern court is the minaret, which

has no parallel in the land of Islam. It is built of red stone, unlike the rest of the edifice, ornamented with sculpture and of great height. The ball on the top is of glistening white marble and its 'apples' (small balls surrounding the minaret) are of pure gold. The passage is so wide that an elephant could go up by it. A person in whom I have confidence, told me that when it was built he saw an elephant climbing with stone to the top. This minaret in term of size is one of the wonders of the world."

Ibn Batuta was a traveller who had journeyed down to this part of the world precisely with the intention of discovering and enjoying his adventurous journeys. As such, he observed every palace, every monument, every court and the people with keen interest. He noted every detail with interest. These are the factors, which add luster to his accounts and make them fascinating, taking us directly into those times. It is because of this, that one is tempted to quote his accounts further, so let the reader have a glimpse of what the Sultanate era was like. Much impressed by Delhi of Muhammad-bin-Tughluq's time, Batuta continues his account with much relish, "Outside Delhi is a large reservoir named after Sultan Iltutmish, from which the inhabitants draw their drinking water. It is supplied by rain water and is about three kilometers in length by half the breadth. In the centre there is a great pavilion built of squared stones two

stories high. When the reservoir is filled with water it can be reached only in boats but when the water is low, the people go into it. Inside it is a mosque, and most of the times it is occupied by mendicants devoted to the service of God. When the water dries up at the side of the reservoir, they sow sugarcane, cucumbers, green melons and pumpkins. The melons and pumpkins are very sweet but of small size. Between Delhi and the abode of the Caliphate, is the private reservoir which is larger than the other. Along its sides, there are forty pavilions around which live the musicians." The accounts of Ibn Batuta, apart from being interesting, extensively document the life and times of that period.

Now, coming back to the Sultans, the first imperative is to analyse the fact of Sultan Muhammad's accession to the throne which is replete with controversies. Ghiyathuddin had gone to Bengal to handle an uprising. Muhammad planned a grand welcome, seemingly to express his delight and appreciation of his father's achievement. But, in reality it was a crafty plan to kill his father. The plan is said to have had the blessing of Saint Nizamuddin, with whom Ghiyathuddin had a big altercation, when the Tughluqabad fort was under construction. The Saint had neither forgiven nor forgotten the Sultan's arrogance.

Though this plan may not have been really made or carried out, history reveals that Muhammad's image remained

tarnished because the common belief was that he had his father killed. He has also been described as an eccentric king. The general state of tension, sporadic intrusions and the growing congestion weighed heavily on Muhammad's mind. He ordered shift of the capital for the second time and on a mass scale. This time, it was to Daulatabad, about one thousand one hundred twenty five kilo miles away towards south (Pl. 42).

Criers were commissioned to announce the Sultan's orders of a shift. He announced categorically that whosoever remained in the city after three days would be severely punished and done to death. The Sultan wanted strict compliance. To ensure that his orders were followed, he decided to move out of the city on the last day. He climbed to the battlements of his palace to ensure that no hearth was lit, no smoke emitted from any chimney and that there was not a glimmer of light from any home.

Daulatabad known as Deogiri earlier, was chosen partly because of security reasons and partly because Muhammad-bin-Tughluq was tempted towards Alauddin's big conquests and enormous acquisition of wealth from the south. But no sooner did he settle in his new capital than the problem of defence began to besiege him again. If the dangers to the empire lay in the north, its strength too was inherent to that region.

The people had already vehemently opposed the change because with their

homes abandoned they felt totally uprooted. Their trades were ruined and the fields, left uncared for long, turned in to a state of neglect. Troubled, the Sultan ordered a return to Delhi once again.

Muhammad thus realized his folly and strived to set things right. But problems did not leave him. Water scarcity continued to plague the people. The Sultan had returned from Daulatabad in AD 1334 but famine compelled him to plan yet another exodus within a short span of two years.

Fortunately, the choice of place this time gave relief to the people. It was near ancient Khor, on the river Ganga, and the fertile Gangetic plain offered the people scope to flourish and prosper. They were happy. The Sultan first had temporary accommodation erected and subsequently more permanent buildings were raised. The entire arrangement was made by AINU-I-MULK, the governor of Oudh.

Strangely enough, Muhammad had to abandon even this town, which he had so fondly named Svargaduari which meant the gateway to heaven. The shift from Svargaduari became inevitable as the governor threatened to rebel. Muhammad returned to Delhi. His love-hate relationship with Delhi came to a halt this time. The area between Qutb and Siri had already been walled. The big enclosure, surrounding all the earlier cities, had given the entire area the semblance of a sprawling city and

a 'glamorous' one too, as considered by Ibn Batuta. The people seemed to be at peace, but not the ruler. Muhammad-bin-Tughluq has mainly been described as a refined scholar and a man of striking originality which when mishandled vastly contributed to his troubles. He was always impatient to impose his novel ideas and inventions upon his subjects. This, coupled with his uncontrolled temper led him to extreme measures of cruelty. He enforced his novel or original ideas on his people who were severely punished if they refused to conform.

Once, he decided to introduce copper coins, which met with total failure. Silver was in such abundance at that time that no one wanted even to look at the copper coinage. To them, it was a sign of utter poverty and misery. His experiment with copper coins failed. His other economic policies did not meet with much acceptance either. When finances began to dwindle, he decided to fix the prices of commodities at a low rate which once again met with resentment.

Muhammad tried to consolidate his empire and succeeded in this mission to a great extent. He had stretched his empire as far as Mysore, though even there his eccentricities caused agitation. However, the achievements had fanned his aspiration to such an extent that he aspired to conquer Persia and China also, which only led to the extinction of his financial resources. In a desperate attempt to fill his treasuries again,



Pl. 42. Daulatabad Fort, Aurangabad.



he levied high taxes resulting further increase in discontent. Muhammad, a victim of his own follies was overpowered by anger and revenge, the two major failings of his character. When Hindu cultivators abandoned their land and fled to jungles, he ordered the entire jungle to be set on fire to kill them all. If a survivor was found, he was beheaded. Such extreme punishment led to many revolts and uprisings. A brilliant Sultan, who verged on genius, met with unfortunate situations just because he could not direct his brilliance in proper direction. Historians, comparing him to Akhnaten of Egypt, Charles XII of Sweden and Joseph II of Austria, have termed him the brilliant failure of history.

Ibn Batuta however, unwilling to change his views about the Sultan insists on appraising as of the grandeur of Muhammad's court, a favorite topic with this traveller. It would not be out of place to visit the court of Muhammad-bin-Tughluq along with the Moroccan traveller whose accounts have always charmed us with minor details.

According to Batuta the palace had several gates. He writes, "At the first gate were a number of guards. Along with them sat buglers, trumpeters and pipe players. Whenever an Amir or a noble arrived, the playing of the instruments heralded his presence. This process was repeated at the second and the third gate too. To ensure security, Jalandins - Arabian flaggers - were posted on the

first gate. They were kept in readiness to inflict punishment as soon as it was required, or whenever the king desired. Between the first and second gates was posted a troop of security men. Between the second and third gates, was a large platform provided for the Naquibs who perhaps were symbolic inflictors of royal punishments as they carried maces of gold and silver. The chief Naquib wore an ostentatious kind of dress. His high cap was made of gold and decorated with a peacock feather. The other Naquibs stood in front. They wore low gilded caps and girdles and carried whips with gold or silver handles. The second gate led to a commodious hall. There was a third gate providing direct access to the hall. On this gate, sat Munims or scribes who noted the name. The scribe were given the note and escorted the visitor and upon reaching inside the hall announced the visitor's name. The attendants accompanying the visitor varied according to the status of the visitor. As a disciplinary measure, absentee attendants or officials (if absent for threee days continuously) were not allowed to enter and resume duty without the Sultan's formal permission. When permitted, the erring official had to present a gift to the Sultan. This ceremony took place in the hall of audience. Constructed of one thousand wooden pillars, its roof was exquisitely carved."

Apart from Ibn Batuta, there were travellers from other countries, too.

Muhammad had always encouraged and welcomed visitors. A visitor from Damascus left behind an creditable account of the city of the Delhi. According to him, Delhi was a beautiful city surrounded with extensive gardens on three sides, the western side bordered by the ridge. The Tughluqs were credited with having adorned the city of Delhi with some exquisite monuments. Muhammad-bin-Tughluq too made his contribution and shared this distinction.

Since water was always a scarce commodity, the monarch thought of ways to enrich the city's water supply by getting tanks and reservoirs constructed. One such relic of this time, which survived for long and was constructed by Muhammad was a big reservoir to the east of Khirki with a bridge-like construction. The construction and design august that it was meant to be a dam across the ravine which runs from the south, with sluices for the over-flow. Called Satpula or even Satphala (Pl. 43), the band was constructed to regulate the flow of water with an embankment 850 feet long. It was situated about 800 meters east of Khirki mosque. Khirki itself is reduced to the status of a village now, but was once a flourishing township. The Satpula band had eleven openings, two on each end and seven on the bridge itself. The bridge was double-storied. This embankment was apparently thrown across a drain near Khirki. The

embankment wall on one side, formed the southern wall of Jahanpanah. The dam towered 213 feet above the ground. The drain was in existence until recently in its original form and through the same channels.

Sometimes it appears that in all fairness, it was not appropriate to have called Muhammad-bin-Tughluq either an insane monarch or even "Muhammad the Bloody" as had been done by some chroniclers simply because he enforced his views and plans rather drastically. Later historical research has retrieved his image to some extent. Some acts, like choosing officials entirely on merit and not for their religion, or having extended the empire to great heights, are a few of the things which easily won him the distinctive title of "Muhammad the Just." No sovereign of Delhi until the time of Aurangzeb had ruled so vast a territory as Muhammad had done.

The fact that Delhi had one thousand colleges during his time is almost unbelievable. Delhi boasted of 70 hospitals too. The number of monasteries and chapels at that time was around two thousand. Delhi was connected with other major cities by well regulated horse carriage routes and foot posts.

History has been kind to the eccentric Muhammad and recognized his many achievements. Saint Nizamuddin Aulia's tomb still stands as one of the few relics of the city of Jahanpanah.



Pl. 43. Satpula, Delhi.



Muhammad-bin-Tughluq had no son. So he decided to appoint his nephew Firuz Shah Tughluq as his successor. Firuz Shah chose to enter the capital of Delhi only five months after his succession to the throne. He is said to have resided earlier at a palace in Khirki which is some five kilometers to the right of the road turning to Delhi and about six kilometers from Qutb. There is a fort and a mosque in the village of Khirki, presumably constructed by his men.

Firuz Shah was an intelligent king. He wanted to begin on a solid foundation of peace and goodwill of his people. He used the period of five months wisely to erase the memories of his predecessor's misdeeds by replacing them with acts that reflected his care and concern about his subjects and the redressal of their wounds and punishments inflicted in the past. He paid generous compensation to those unfortunate ones whose eyes had been gouged out, noses chopped off or limbs cut off. He got a full record prepared of all of Muhammad's misdeeds and had it placed in his tomb and invoked God's grace on the departed soul. During these five months, he also focussed on the day-to-day problems of his subjects and tried to provide them with the necessities of life. Having thus established his image as a just and fair ruler did he enter the city.

As a consequence of the decline of the Sultanate, Delhi too was in the process of disintegration, structurally as well as

administratively. Firuz Shah restored order to his kingdom in northern India but did not bother to retrieve the Deccan states which were easily taken over by the Bahamani dynasty. In many ways, Firuz was more modern in his outlook than his predecessors and was devoid of any ferocity of nature unlike the other Tughluqs. But he was not free from religious bias. He extended the Jaziya - a tax on non-believers of Islam, i.e., on all Hindus.

Firuz Shah was a builder on a grand scale and building activities seem to have spanned the entire period of his reign. The hunting lodges and pavilions, which he constructed in the beginning, heralded signs of tranquil times. Since building was already his passion, it did not take him long to consider raising a new city for which reasons were ever present. Water was always a scarce commodity and so was space due to the growing population. The enormous settlements built on the Aravalli rocks and the terrain around it were far away from the river, the main source of water supply to Delhi. Besides water, the task of transporting grain and other commodities became difficult for their living away from the river. Coupled with a perceptible decline in revenue, all these factors were by now causing considerable discomfort and inconvenience to the general public. All these put together prompted Firuz Shah to give serious thought of building a city close to the river.

He soon embarked on his plan. The site for the new capital was of course chosen to be as close to the river as possible. The specific site for the new city was a place called Gawin. It was a village then and is the site of present Firoz Shah Kotla. The total expanse of the city, as described by two travellers of that time, Afif and Barni was vast. The village Gawin was on the river bank and the distance from the city of Delhi, as mentioned in their accounts was five kos which is about fifteen kilometers. Ziauddin Barni had enthusiastically foreseen a glorious future for the city. The total expanse of the city had embraced 18 villages of which Gawin was the core village. According to the records of those two travellers, it included the land of Kathiwara, the identity of which has not been established so far. On one side, it extended up to Indarpat the spot where Humayun later built his fort. The city had extended to Razia Sultana's tomb in a locality known as Bulbuli Khana and was close to an old gate now known as Turkman Gate. It spanned the entire area of the later city of Shahjahanabad, to the ridge between modern Subzi Mandi and Civil Lines.

Roughly speaking, the extension of the city formed a semi-circle with a two-and-a-half-kilometers radius, the centre being Kotla on the riverbank. Starting from that point, the row of houses began and continued on to Chandni Chowk, the main business center. The line of houses ran up to the point where stands

a gate called the Lahori Gate, which was a later construction. Towards the southern end was a sparsely populated area while the area between the present city walls and Purana Qila was the most thickly populated. Around the ridge, there was a sort of suburb, where the king had one of his hunting lodges constructed. Surrounded by high walls, the city had no boundary walls but it is believed that the first thing to be constructed was a boundary wall with a moat around it. One feels inclined to accept the view that pillage had a great role to play and even if there was a wall, pillage left no trace behind.

So, apparently the city which Firuz Shah had chosen to call Firozabad had no city walls. But he had walls constructed around his hunting houses and Kotla as a line of defence. He had chosen for it the portion of Firozabad which lay adjacent to Purana Qila. As per design, the city was probably planned so as to have the Kotla of Firuz Shah at the northeastern corner and Purana Qila at the southeastern corner.

Firozabad was actually an open city with a shape more like a half hexagon. The suburbs of Firozabad joined the suburbs of the old city. Firoz Shah Kotla was also his major achievement as a builder, however, the present state of Kotla has a different story to tell. The surrounding walls of Kotla have gone, probably used to provide material for the walls of the city. A few parts still stand

as a specimen. The masonry appears to be of a very rough kind. The rooms were of a dark type and the roof of a vaulted kind, which drew its support from the mortar which did not seem to be very sturdy. The buildings inside are in a total state of disintegration and it is difficult to assess the design and allocation of the apartments. The part of the building, on which Firuz Shah had set the Asokan pillar is the structure surviving the ravages of time (Pls. 44, 46, and 47). The other surviving structure is the Jama Masjid, a circular building with underground rooms. The palace supposed to be the Emperor's palace is in total ruins and no form can be made out or described.

The city said to have been constructed there was of enormous size but there are controversial descriptions of it. So it is difficult to say whether it was a city in the true sense of the word or whether it was just a grouping of suburbs which developed there. Historians have considered the greater possibility of there being scattered suburbs around the Kotla of Firuz Shah.

Firozabad was a fairly big town. It stretched from the river to Alauddin's tank and from Khushk-i-Shikar, on the ridge to the traditional site of the Pandava's city. It included a large area, which also comprised area of later Shahjahanabad.

Within the ramparts of the fortress, Firuz Shah had built a number of palaces and buildings of public utility. There

is no trace left of his Palace of Grapes, the Palace of the Wooden Gallery and the Palace of the Public Court which apparently was something like a hall of public audience. The remains of the cathedral mosque built by Firuz Shah can probably still be found opposite the pedestal that holds the Asokan Pillar.

Firuz Shah was an intelligent monarch who had established an altruistic image early on through his good deeds, though he had not relaxed strictness with regards to his Hindu subjects. Having established his rule and image, he pursued his interests, chief amongst which was his interest in building and restoration of monuments of consequence. He was an exponent of the canal system and built some major tanks and canals which saved the inhabitants of Delhi from facing water shortages and provided tremendous relief. Not only that, these accounted for the large number of beautiful gardens and orchards which produced many new and rare varieties of fruits and flowers in Delhi at that time.

The four main mosques of Firuz Shah's time were built by his minister Khan-i-Jahan. The prominent features of these four mosques are high walls around the courtyard with arcades of arches on the interior, topped with heavy drip stones and a number of domes and minarets. The rough kind of stonework which was the hallmark of this era is seen in these mosques also. The dark stained plaster accentuated



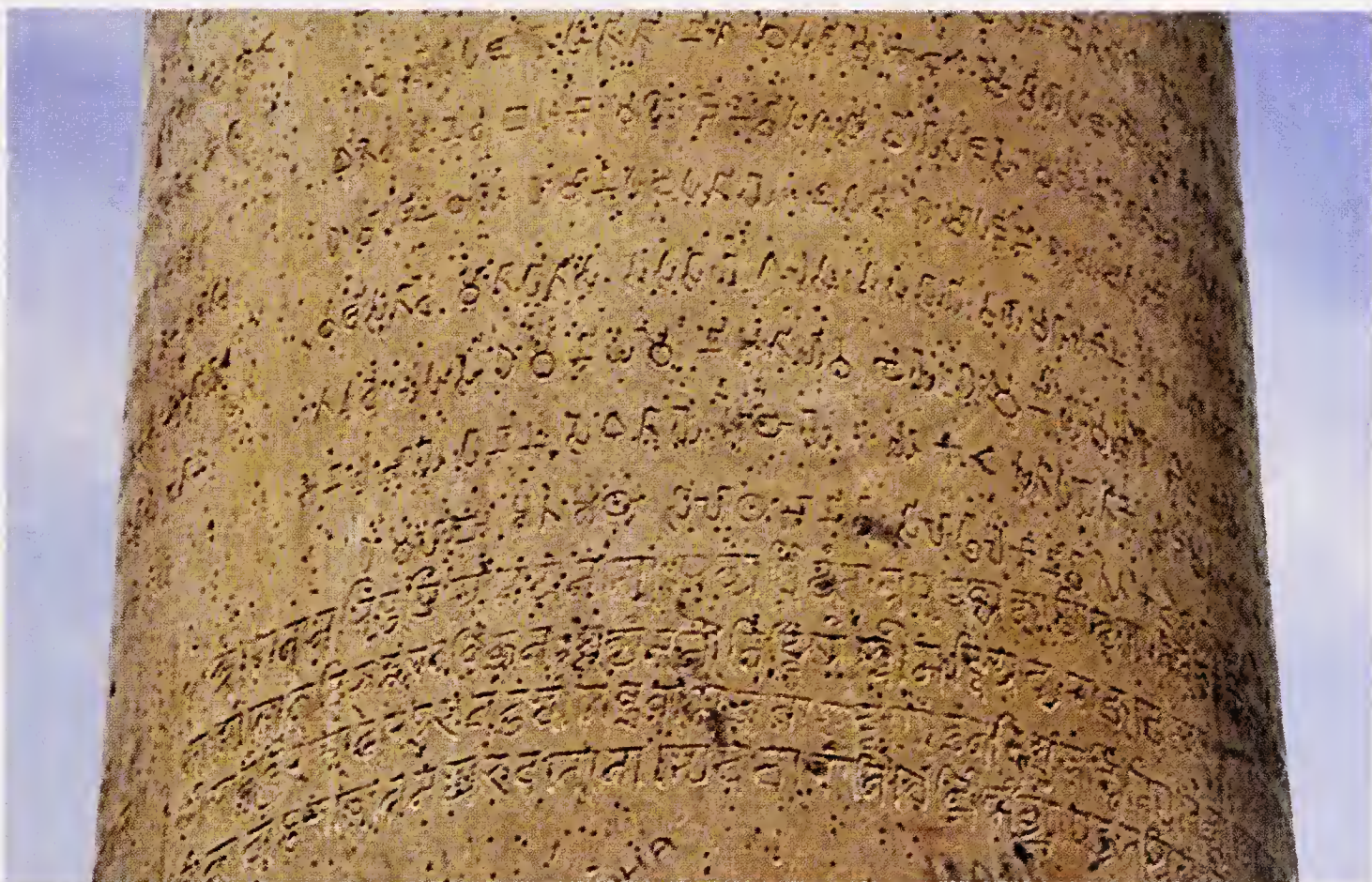
Pl. 44. Kotla Firoz Shah pyramidal structure with Asokan pillar.



Pl. 45. Remains of Kotla Firoz Shah.



Pl. 46. Jami Masjid, Kotla Firoz Shah.



Pl. 47. Inscriptions on Asokan pillar, Kotla Firoz Shah.

the very somber look though it also adds to a sinister kind of awe. Amongst these mosques, the Kalan Masjid (Pls. 48 - 50) with its high entrance flanked by a pair of columns is the most imposing one.

The Kalan Masjid is a single room, 71 feet in length and 41 feet in breadth. It has two rows of four pillars, each down the centre and one row of coupled pillars along the front. The columns divide the whole area into fifteen squares, each of which is covered by a small dome, the central one being higher than the rest. On the outside, the building consists of two stories, of which the lower forms a kind of plinth to the actual place of worship which is 28 feet high. The total height to the top of the battlement is 66 feet. The walls of the upper storey had a number of openings, filled with bold geometrical tracery of marble. General Cunningham has considered this mosque as a typical and favourable specimen of architecture of the fourteenth century. The bright paint plaster has been peeled off but the structure stands solid even after four centuries.

The second mosque is in Begumpur (Pl. 51), now a village but in those days was a part of the circuit of Jahanpanah. It was like a Jama Masjid which is a mosque for congregation. The main feature of this mosque is the lofty arched bay. The dome is of a very reasonable proportion.

The third mosque, which is to the south of Nizamuddin's Dargah, is known as the Kali or Sanjan Masjid (Pls. 52-54). Though in ruins, it is a fine example illustrating the arcade mosque. The court is cut into four smaller courts. There is a fine domed entrance with an inscription in white plaster stating the names of the builders.

The fourth mosque, of a similar description is in the village Khirki and is just within Jahanpanah's walls (Pl. 55). This mosque is a rare example where the covered area exceeds the open court. The four small quadrangles are symmetrical and produce the effect of light and dark, a factor which has made this mosque unique.

The Jama Masjid a public mosque, could accommodate about 10,000 people (Pl. 46). Among the other miscellaneous buildings, some acquired significance because of their sentimental value. Notable among these is a prominent name which has become almost a landmark and is known as Khushk-i-Shikar.

Firuz Shah was grief stricken at the death of his son. He looked for something to engage his mind. Interested in both hunting and building, he is said to have constructed a strange set of buildings. In those buildings, he had an enclosure wall erected and named the whole complex Khushk-i-Shikar. He used these buildings as his hunting lodge. The odd appearance of these buildings gave rise



Pl. 48. Kalan Masjid (as in 1858)



Pl. 49. Kalan Masjid in lithograph.



Pl. 50. Kalan Masjid as it looks now-a-days.

to various conjectures afterwards and whatever was left of them got different names. The lofty building was named Pir Ghaib (Pl. 56) and was described as an observatory by some and clock tower by others. Some even called it Chauburji because it was a set of four minarets. Another such curious construction, which was discovered around the 1930s was an underground passage connecting the top of the ridge with an open well on the western side. No one has been able to decide the purpose of this passage.

Two tombs of consequence are the tombs of Qadam Sharif and Firuz Shah's own tomb (Pls. 57 and 58). They have acquired significance because of the personal accounts associated with them. The tomb of Qadam Sharif is

the tomb of Fateh Khan, the Sultan's son. Firuz Shah, after great effort and at tremendous expense once acquired an imprint of the Caliph's footprints. The king had treasured it as his most valued possession. When he asked his son to take a precious object from the royal treasury, the prince is said to have chosen these. Firuz was dismayed but agreed to give these to him on the condition that the footprints should be placed on the heart of the one who died first. Most unfortunately it was the prince who died first. The tomb which the grief-stricken Sultan got constructed for his son is about one km west of the western wall of Shahjahanabad. The father built it with loving care and got a wall constructed around it. The imprint



Pl. 51. Begumpuri Masjid at Begumpur village.



Pl. 52. Kali Masjid, Nizamuddin.



Pl. 53. Kali Masjid-Entrance.



Pl. 54. Kali Masjid (inside).



Pl. 55. Khirki Masjid.



Pl. 56. Pir Ghaib.

was finally placed at this tomb thus giving it the name Qadam Sharif that means the footprint of the Caliph.

Firuz's own tomb is at Hauz Khas, a tank constructed by Alauddin Khalji which was in a state of complete disrepair. Firuz Shah not only got it renovated but also added vast extensions giving it a totally new look. He planned to have his tomb placed near the tank. His tomb is a specimen of simplicity combined with nobility of structure. The sloping wall, the hallmark of the Tughluqs was the pattern of the tomb walls too. The tomb has proportioned domes which are perfectly symmetrical. The paintings on the interior of the dome merit attention. After the tombs, attention is drawn to the dargahs which Firuz Shah constructed. The Dargah of Makhdum Sabzawari is between Hauz Khas and Siri. These have the typical features of the Tughluq dynasty but a feature which is of great consequence in all these buildings is the hidden but very noticeable hand of Hindu architects. This confirms the fact that the earlier buildings of the Khalji and Sultanate era definitely made use of the exquisite carvings of Hindu temples of the Rajput period.

The old Idgah, located behind Qadam Sharif and on the rising ground of the ridge is the place where Muslims assembled for their prayers during Ramdan and Id. This is within a fortification wall as the danger of enemy attack even at such congregations was not exceptional.

Another building, one of the palaces of Firuz Shah, is on the rising ground near the Jail. Most likely, this is the group of buildings forming a part of one of the famous plates of Daniel titled "Oriental scenery". This palace was known as Khushk-i-Anwar or Mehndian. There was a central building with a multi-roomed lower storey and above, a domed pavilion with twelve monolithic pillars.

Another dargah of great fame and a famous landmark of Delhi is Roshan Chiragh which the Sultan constructed in the memory of Shaikh Nasiruddin Muhammad (Pl. 59). The Saint was highly revered and it was with a sense of deep esteem that the Sultan named it 'Roshan Chiragh' which means 'the esteemed light'. To give the dargah prominence, he also built a walled township by the name Roshan Chiragh Delhi. The town used to have three gateways. Unfortunately, at present none of the gates remain. The wide road in New Delhi only bears a signpost of that name and parts of crumbling boundary walls can be seen by the motorists for some distance.

Though a number of Asian rulers of that era have been stated to have shown no regard for buildings erected by their predecessors, Firuz Shah was different. He devoted much time and attention to the repairs of buildings of his predecessors and, at times, even gave the restoration work priority over his construction activity. May be this was an extension of



Pl. 57. Qadam Sharif, Paharganj.



Pl. 58. Tomb of Firuz Shah Tughluq, Hauz Khas.

his passion for construction of buildings during his reign. The most notable restoration work was the repairs of the famous Qutb Minar. The top storey had been damaged by an earthquake. This was replaced and surmounted by a stone cupola. The top was damaged again in AD 1803 by a second earthquake; and a new cupola of late Mughal design was fixed by Major R.E. Smith who had repaired the entire monument at that time.

Firuz Shah's generosity extended even to the buildings of the Rajput period. The embankments of Suraj Kund owe their restoration and preservation to him. The Sultan also erected the outer and the inner entrance gates to the dargah of Saint Nizamuddin Aulia. Firuz Shah acquired great fame as the builder of an extensive canal system in Delhi. He constructed many tanks and reservoirs and restored several others. One prominent insertion in this list is the name of the famous tank of Hauz-i-Khas which, of course, was constructed by Alauddin. With the lapse of time, with neglect and lack of maintenance, this tank had silted up and was in a state of despair. Firuz Shah, before starting the construction of new tanks, took up the task of getting this tank repaired. Bestowed with aesthetic sense, Firuz Shah took great care to beautify the surroundings of this vast Hauz-i-Khas. Lovely gardens came up around the tank. Since he was also a great patron of learning and religion, he got a Madrasa constructed at the corner of Hauz-i-Khas.

This Madrasa was meant to be a college for the study of Arabic and is considered as one of the best-proportioned and most attractive buildings of the Tughluq era. Firuz also constructed his tomb there, as mentioned earlier. The Madrasa was in close proximity to the tomb and had acquired the status of an academy noted for teaching of the Quran.

He had another extensive canal made in Delhi, named Hissar-i-Firuz which meandered through most of the city. It was this canal which when taken up and restructured by the Mughal Emperor Shahjahan, beautified the then prestigious business centre of Chandni Chowk. Besides these two, there were a number of drains and canals which Firuz Shah had constructed. He also constructed the first canal in northern India. It was of course, the Yamuna canal which left the river at a place called Karnal and followed its western bank down to Hansi with a branch to Delhi.

Besides construction, adorning the city was also part of his programme. For this, if he located some nice structure of pillar at some place, he always tried to acquire it and have it transported to the place which he thought as a right site for the installation of that object. The account of the transportation of two Asokan pillars is quite interesting. The account is so fascinating and ingenious that every chronicle, whether written by a historian or by a traveller, makes mention of it. These pillars were already 1,500 years old but were still intact



Pl. 59. Dargah Roshan-Chirag.

when Firuz Shah found them. One of the pillars was found at Topra near Ambala and one near Meerut. Both these pillars are of Asoka and are inscribed with Asoka's edicts and so are of great significance. Firuz Shah chose to get the Ambala pillar erected on the ridge near one of his hunting boxes (Pl. 60), the site close to the present Hindu Rao Hospital. The pillar found at Meerut was transported to Firozabad and adorned his palace there. This was the pillar on which were inscribed the basic tenets of Asoka's religion. The inscriptions on the pillar are in four compartments at the four cardinal points and around the lower portion. These are edicts and were written in the twenty-seventh year of Asoka's reign, after his probable conversion to Buddhism.

Shams-i-Shiraj Afif has given a graphic account of the transportation of the pillars to Delhi. The first step was to lower them as they were still firmly standing when Firuz saw them. They were very carefully lowered on to a bed of cotton of the softest variety known as 'Sambhal' or silk cotton. The pillar was then encased in reed and raw skin. His description is so vivid that it carries the reader to that spot.

As described by Afif : "Removal of the Minar-i-Zarine : Khazrabad is 90 kos from Delhi, in the vicinity of hills. When the Sultan visited that district and saw the column in the district of Topra, he resolved to remove it to Delhi and erect it there as a memorial to the future

generations. After pondering over the best means of lowering the column, orders were issued commanding all the people dwelling in the neighborhood within and outside the town and all soldiers, both horse-riding and foot. They were ordered to bring all implements and material suitable for the work. Directions were issued for bringing parcels of 'Sambhal' cotton (silk cotton). Quantities of this silk cotton were placed round the column and when the earth at its base was removed, it fell gently over on the bed prepared for it. The cotton was then removed by degrees, and after some days the pillar was examined. A large square stone was found as a base which was also taken out. The pillar was then encased from top to bottom in reeds and ram skin so that no damage might occur to it. A carriage with 42 wheels was constructed, and ropes were attached to each wheel. Thousands of men hauled at every rope, and after great labour and difficulty the pillar was raised on to the carriage. The strong rope was fastened to each wheel and 200 men pulled at each of these ropes. By simultaneous exertion of so many thousands of men, the carriage was moved and was brought to the bank of the Jamuna (River Yamuna). Here, the Sultan came to see the work going on. A number of large boats had been collected, some of these could carry 5,000 and 7,000 maunds of grains and the least of them 2000 maunds. The column was very ingeniously transferred to these boats and was then conducted



Pl. 60. Asokan pillar, Ridge, Delhi.

to Firozabad where it was landed and conveyed into Khushk with infinite labour and skill.”

Giving an account of the raising of the ‘obelisk’, Afif proceeds further and says, “At that time the author (a historian of this book was 12 years old and was a pupil of the respected Murkhan. When the pillar was brought to the place, a building was commenced for its reception near the Jama Masjid and the most skilled architects were employed. It was constructed of stone and chunam and consisted of several stages of steps (polish). When a step was finished the column was raised on to it, another step was then built and the pillar was again raised and so on... in succession until it reached the intended height.”

Arriving at this stage, contrivances had to be devised to place it in an erect position. “Ropes of substantial thickness had to be obtained and windlasses placed on each of the six stages of the base. The ends of the ropes were fastened to the top of the pillar and the other passed over the windlasses which were firmly secured with many fastenings. The wheels were then turned, and the column was raised about half a gaz (a gaz equals 36 inches). Logs of wood and bales of cotton were then placed under it to prevent its sinking. In this way, by degrees and in the course of several days, the column was raised to a perpendicular position. Large beams were then placed round it as shores until quite a cage of scaffolding was formed. It was thus secured in an

upright position, straight as an arrow, without the smallest deviation from the perpendicular. The square stone, earlier spoken of, was placed under the pillar.” After it was raised, some ornamental friezes of black and white stone were placed round its two capitals (*saz-i-an*) and over these there was raised a gilded copper cupola, called *kalasa* in Hindi. The height of the obelisk was thirty-two gaz, eight gaz was sunk in its pedestal and twenty-four gaz was visible. On the base of the obelisk there were engraved several lines of writing in Brahmi. Many Brahmins and Hindu devotees were invited to read them, but no one was able to do so. It is said that a certain infidel Hindu interpreted them as stating that no one should be able to remove the obelisk from its place till there arose in the later days a Muslim king named Sultan Firuz, etc.

About the other obelisk in the Khushk-i-Shikar, he said “This obelisk stood in the vicinity of the town of Meerut in the Doab and was somewhat smaller than the Minar-i-Zarine. This was also removed by Sultan Firuz Shah with similar skill and labour and was re-erected on a hill in Khushk-i-Shikar amid great feasting and rejoicing.”

In another account the details of the rope were also given. It was stated that ten maunds of silk thread were used to twine the rope with which the pillar was tied to be raised and it said that the moment the pillar was lifted even half a yard, heavy logs of sandalwood

were placed and pressed to support the pillar.

This pillar was broken in several pieces by an explosion during the siege of Delhi in 1857. These have been pieced together but most of the inscription is missing. But the pillars, having withstood the vicissitudes of time, still stand undaunted and are a perennial source of inspiration and guidance.

Firuz who paid more attention to learning and the cultural aspects of life, could perhaps be pictured as a learned and serious Turkish, James I who liked to spend much of his time in hunting, holding courts, discussing archaeology and theology in his spare time and besides all these in building and restoring activities. His intellectual interests prompted him to start many colleges and schools of learning. Between Firozabad and Delhi, Firuz Shah built 120 monasteries.

Firuz Shah who is credited with having started the well planned and extensive canal system in Delhi, furthered that interest in utilizing the waters for planning and growth of gardens in and around Delhi which led to its added beautification. The city of Hissar Firoza which the Sultan founded after two or three years of his return from Bengal developed into a beautiful city with extensive gardens and orchards. He even gifted free land to people who evinced any interest in gardening. Many new trees were planted in Delhi for the first

time and guavas were one of them. The two canals brought from doab, of which, one was from river Satluj and the other from Yamuna made the water available in plenty, facilitating the proliferation of gardens and orchards. The fruit orchards flourished so well that their yields itself added a significant amount to the royal treasury.

Owing to Firuz Shah's diligent efforts and keen interest in gardens, 1022 gardens find mention in the records of Firuz Shah's time. There were three varieties of grapes - black, white and Chittori Grapes which were grown in abundance then. Apricots, peaches, and guavas were also grown in such abundance that the revenue from fruits alone was a big addition to the treasury.

With a number of cities, construction programmes and restoration activities, the colleges and hospitals to take care of the body and mind and last but not the least the heavenly surroundings of the gardens to relax and enjoy in, it is no wonder that Firuz Shah's reign of 40 years has been regarded as an excellent one. The means of transportation and communication too did not escape his attention. There were modes of transportation even within the citadel where the underground passages were made with galleries with enough for ladies' chariots to pass through if they chose to travel to distant places like river banks or the old fort of Qila Rai Pithora.

Firozabad was undoubtedly a populous city but probably was also the Windsor of Delhi as called by Lane Poole. It was not regarded as a separate city by many but judging it by the same yardstick by which the other cities of Delhi have been judged, even Firozabad merits the same status.

Firuz Shah was a devout Muslim who allowed himself only a little indulgence of wine and hunting. Since his other interests were intellectual and constructive, his omissions of bigotry were easily overlooked by people. Though born of a Hindu princess, he did not spare any Hindu from the tax of *Jaziya* or any other punishment.

The internal administration of the country was in the hands of a minister, Khan-i-Jahan who was an erstwhile Hindu from the south. After his death his son took over and assumed the same title. The mode of payment of salaries, as approved by Firuz Shah was through gifts of Jagirs (endowment of Lands).

Firuz chose to write a kind of memoir of his deeds and all the good work that he had done. He listed all the varieties of cruel punishments which were meted out to the subjects in the time of his predecessors and mentioned the reforms that he introduced and the gruesome practice of mutilation that he abolished. He surely expected commendation for the abolition but he could be very fierce when his religious zeal was roused. In his own words: "I ordered that the leaders of

these people and the promoters of this abomination should be put to death. I forbade the infliction of any severe punishment on the Hindus in general but I destroyed their idol temples and instead thereof raised mosques." But despite his religious bias Firuz Shah earned a reputation of being an able ruler who was just and fair.

Firuz Shah died in AD 1388 and with him departed the glory of the Tughluq dynasty. The era of peace, prosperity and stability came to an end. There was strife amongst Firuz Shah's sons that caused a massacre at Firozabad. The revolts naturally led to a weakened defence on the frontiers. The chaotic conditions, disunity and retaliations paved a way for outsiders to enter again.

Timur Lane or Timur, the Lame had strengthened his position by annexing most of the dominions of Mongols. With a full appraisal of the confusion which prevailed at Delhi, Timur decided to attack. He set out of Samarkand with 90,000 strong cavalry and entered India from the Punjab side. He advanced towards Delhi, he was confronted by the army of Mahmud Shah Tughluq who had taken over after Firuz Shah. Mahmud was from the house of Tughluqs and had been the logical choice after Firuz Shah. Mahmud and his army fought bravely but Timur who had come with a large force won the battle.

Timur pitched camp on the banks of Hauz Khas and received surrender of the

city. He is stated to have agreed to spare the inhabitants ransom but with little or no control of his army, the situation took a grim turn. There were altercations between the army and the citizens who resented the soldiers' behavior with their women folk. The situation went out of control when one of the citizens hurled a country made bomb that caused heavy damage to Timur's ammunitions as well as men. Timur's apartments in the fort were damaged too. Timur lost restraint and a mass pillage and massacre was ordered. The city, which suffered this fate was the city of "Old Delhi" with its extension of Siri and Jahanpanh. Timur's memoirs have presented a picture, not only of the city but also of the conditions prevailing at the time of his invasion.

According to his account: "The flames of strife were thus lit and spread through the entire city of Jahanpanah, Siri and Old Delhi. The Turks went on killing and plundering. The Hindus set fire to their own houses, burnt their wives and children and rushed into fight and were killed. A large number were spared too." Timur had invaded India after having conquered Persia, Afghanistan and Mesopotamia; victories which seemed to have satisfied his ego as well as enriched his treasuries. However he did not seem to like to retain conquered territory. He stayed in Delhi for only two weeks and departed with all the spoils and the men he had taken as prisoners.

The intervening period between the Sultanate and the Mughal Empire

which re-established stability occurred, therefore in the fifteenth century. Though Delhi could not claim the status of an imperial city during this period, a kind of interlude, its other gain was the singularly beautiful buildings of the Pathan and Lodi style. The kings of this intervening period can certainly not be compared to their predecessors nor to the ones who followed. They lacked ability to give a stable government.

The successors of the Tughluqs were the Sayyids and Lodis after whom came Babur, the first of the Mughals. Delhi, of course, was the automatic choice and the natural destination for them all. Though Babur did not like the hostile climate of Delhi which bordering the desert had extremes of climate but the Golden Triangle was the only region from where he felt he could command the entire country. So Babur chose Delhi.

He was a direct descendant of Timur, but part Mongol and part Tartar. Having had the privilege of being influenced by the Persian civilization, he was enlightened and well educated. He himself was a good writer and one of his works, the *Babur Nama* is classed amongst the better literary works.

Babur chose Delhi and settled there but the conditions were not very favourable. The Rajputs on one end and the Afghans on the other took up arms. It took him long years to establish the extensive empire which ran from Kabul on the west to the border of

Bengal on the east. He died leaving a vast but unstable empire. His son Humayun succeeded him. Humayun locked the restless energy of his father and found it difficult to cope with the administration of such a vast territory. He abandoned Kabul and gave Punjab to his brother.

A new city of Delhi with every monarch seemed to be the tradition. Humayun also followed the same tradition. Although the reason or the pretext for building a new city differed with each one of them, a new city always came into being.

During the reign of Babur, the city of Delhi was reduced to the status of a provincial city because Babur had hastened to Agra as that had been the capital of the Lodis. After Humayun ascended the throne as the second Mughal ruler and returned to Delhi, his first instinct was to restore Delhi to its rightful status as an imperial city and celebrate not only his succession but also the establishment of the Mughal dynasty. And what could be a better way of celebrating all this except to build a new city. So Humayun embarked on his plan in AD 1530.

Humayun was a very kind, generous and relaxed sort of monarch who spent his time in the company of learned and enlightened men whom he sought out and provided his patronage to. He had heard about the glorious kingdom of Indraprastha of the *Mahabharata*.

Whilst searching for a suitable location for his new city, he was told about the probable site of Indraprastha situated on a hilly plain. During the survey, when he chanced upon the site which was believed to be in the vicinity of Indraprastha, his choice was made.

Humayun with his poetic bent of mind conceptualized a city which would excel even the palace of Brahma and be even more powerful than that of the Sun. In such a city of his dreams he wanted to construct a place of seven storeys surrounded by delightful gardens and orchards. Gifted with a rich imagination, Humayun had conceptualized a city fit to be called Dinpanah. It was highly applauded by everyone.

The following account of the founding of Dinpanah is from the *Humayun Nama* of Khond Amir: "Another great work of this just and generous king was the city of Dinpanah, which was really the asylum of religious men. Before building the city, he took counsel with 'his great courtiers and learned companions' and expressed to them his intention to found near the capital of Delhi a city which was to challenge equality with Satura; that the city should be the asylum of wise and intelligent person and be called Dinpanah."

The project was highly appreciated, and one of the learned men Maulana Shahabuddin said that since the numerical value of the word Shah-i-

Badshah Dinpanah was 940, if the city was built during that year, it would be remarkable.

As further stated in *Humayun Nama*, it was; *"In the middle of the month of the sacred Muharram A.H. 940, at an hour which was prescribed by the most clever astrologers and the greatest astronomers that the foundation was laid"*. The foundation for the king's palace was also laid simultaneously. He wanted his city to be unique in every way and to be the envy of the world. He wished his magnum opus to the asylum of scholars, men of wisdom and learning.

It was during the month of Muharram, a month of religious fasting that an auspicious date was fixed to start the digging of the foundation. The king was joined by his senior courtiers, nobles and eminent citizens at a grand function organized for the laying of the foundation. A mass prayer was offered to invoke the blessings of the Almighty. Humayun then laid the first brick of the foundation wall, followed by the rest according to seniority. Next came a similar function to lay the foundation of the Emperor's palace.

Some amount of controversy has arisen regarding the name of the place, as the name "Dinpanah" did not survive long. Apparently, it was in use only during Humayun's time and may be for a few years after his reign. The general public was not aware of it. In popular tradition and folklore, it was the name

"Indarpat" which had survived and remained preserved in their memories. A small fort which had survived the ravages of time came to be known as Purana Qila or the Old Fort (Pls. 61-65). According to some accounts, it was the fort which was renovated and enlarged in line with his wish and adorned to fit his fancy. Gardens were developed in and around it.

However, by and large, all the authentic records have made a mention of the construction of new city and palaces as conceptualized by Humayun. The very fact that Dinpanah has been accepted as one of the seven authentically accepted cities of Delhi confirms that it was established as a new city. It has been described as an extensively laid out city with a formidable citadel which has left behind imposing remains that can be seen even today.

The confusion or the controversy may have arisen because even before the emperor could see this magnanimous concept fully executed, he was driven back to Afghanistan by another Afghan called Sher Shah Suri. This Afghan of the Sur Family had earlier ruled in Bihar and jumped at the opportunity to celebrate his victory by constructing another city. But actually it was just a new quarter of Humayun's city rather than a new city altogether. Sher Shah Suri completed the task left by Humayun. The fort at this place continued to remain the royal palace. Sher Shah made two additions to the

complex, one was the Sher Mandal, traditionally used as a library and the other Sher Shah's mosque, admired for its proportionate dimensions.

Sher Shah died in AD 1545. His son Islam Shah (also named Salim Shah) who succeeded his father made one addition to the city. This was the Salimgarh Fort (Pls. 65 & 66) which guarded over the other fort located over the River Yamuna. The Afghan rule of Sur Dynasty ended in AD 1556. Humayun returned and recaptured his fort. The *Humayun Nama* gives an account of how he conceived the city and got it built. Dinapanah's palace, as it appeared after completion was of an irregular oblong shape. It was three furlongs by one and a half furlongs. The longer sides were on the east and the

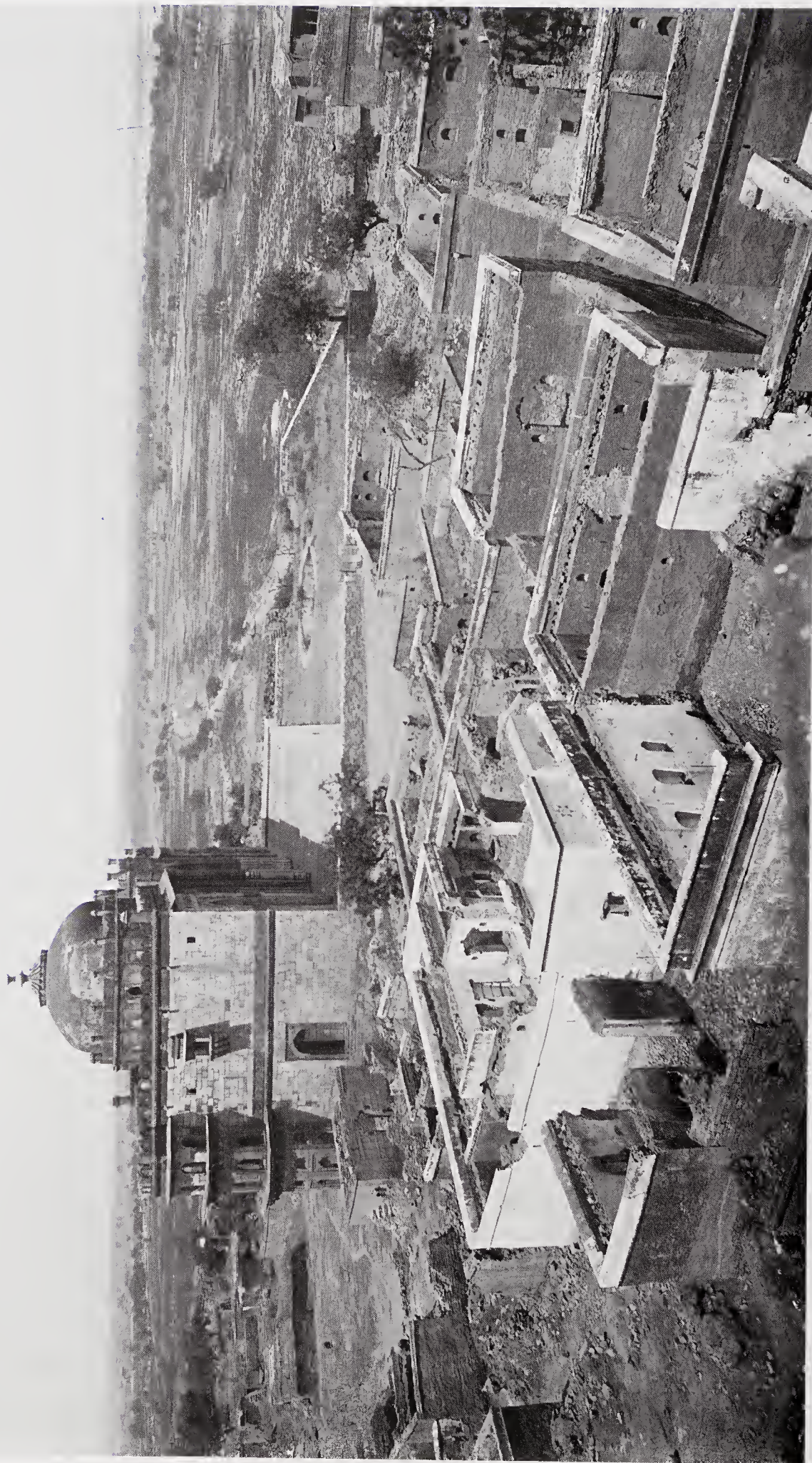
west. It had three gates. Today, the south, north and the east gates are closed but the gate on the west which was the main entrance, is still open. Besides these, there are three wicket gates. Two of them faced the river flowing close to the fort at that time. The third wicket gate was on the western wall of the fort. On each of the four corners of the fort, there were bastions whose enormous size was awe inspiring. The enclosing walls of the city had two storied cells. The walls and cells rose to the height of the lofty gateways. The upper portion of the wall facing the river has crumbled now. But the lower portions intact even today are used by villagers as their humble dwellings. They sometimes keep their cattle also in those cells.



Pl. 61. A view of Purana Qila and moat



Pl. 62. Rampart, Purana Qila.



Pl. 63. Structures inside Purana Qila.



Pl. 64. Rampart (inner view), Purana Qila



Pl. 65. Salimgarh Fort.



Pl. 66. An old painting showing Salimgarh and Red Fort.

Two of the gates that need special mention are the Talaqi Darwaza and the main gate on the western wall (Pl. 67). It is interesting to note the name Talaqi which in Arabic means forsaken or forbidden. It is said that long ago, a king who lived in that fort went out to quell a rebellion. He had vowed not to enter the city unless he defeated the enemy. Unfortunately, the king was killed in the battle. The gate acquired an inauspicious tone and was closed and banned forever. This lofty gate was fifteen meters in height. Two huge bastions stood guard on both sides. The face of the gateway is ornamented with marble bands and bosses.

The front of the main gate is ornamented with grey and red stone. The fact that the River Yamuna flowed in the vicinity of the fort and encircled it seems rather farcical in the present context but the bridge constructed in those good old days, though in ruins now still stands as a reminder when the river had lapped the walls of the western side of the fort.

The two other monuments, surviving within the fort are Masjid Qala-i-Kuhna and Sher Mandal (Pls. 69-70). Both these have acquired interesting overtones with different versions of their names and various associations. Another monument of this time, the Nili Chhatri which according to one account is believed to be a temple of Pandava times, has been linked with Humayun's reign. However, even in that context

the location was the same on the bank of the river. It was about a five minute walk from an important spot called Nigam Bodh Ghat which as the name denotes is an embankment constructed for the convenience of people to bathe or perform religious ceremonies. It would have been on the bank of the river even at the time of the mythical Pandavas. The temple called Nili Chhatri close by the river is where the Pandavas are said to have performed their *Yajnas*. Apparently, no remains of the temple are found now.

Since the monarch Humayun had always tried to link his structures with the glorious city of Indraprastha, the temple of Nili Chhatri also appears to have been included in the folds of his patronage. People now have tried to confirm very positively that it was built by Humayun and was one of his guest houses on the river bank. The controversy will end only when the archaeologists prove it either way. It has been accepted however that the roof of the Nili Chhatri made of enameled stone was brought from some ancient building.

Now, a few words about the Nigam Bodh Ghat. Well, tradition deems it to be the only monument associated with Indraprastha. According to Indian mythological tradition, about 5,000 years ago Brahma, the creator of the Universe had forgotten all about the scriptures. He is believed to have regained his memory by a dip in River Yamuna at



Pl. 67. Main entrance, Purana Qila.



Pl. 68. Qala-i-Kuhna Masjid, Purana Qila.

that particular spot and hence the place acquired the name Nigam Bodh Ghat, meaning thereby that was the place where Brahma regained his wisdom and memory. Nigam signifies Vedas and Bodh means knowledge.

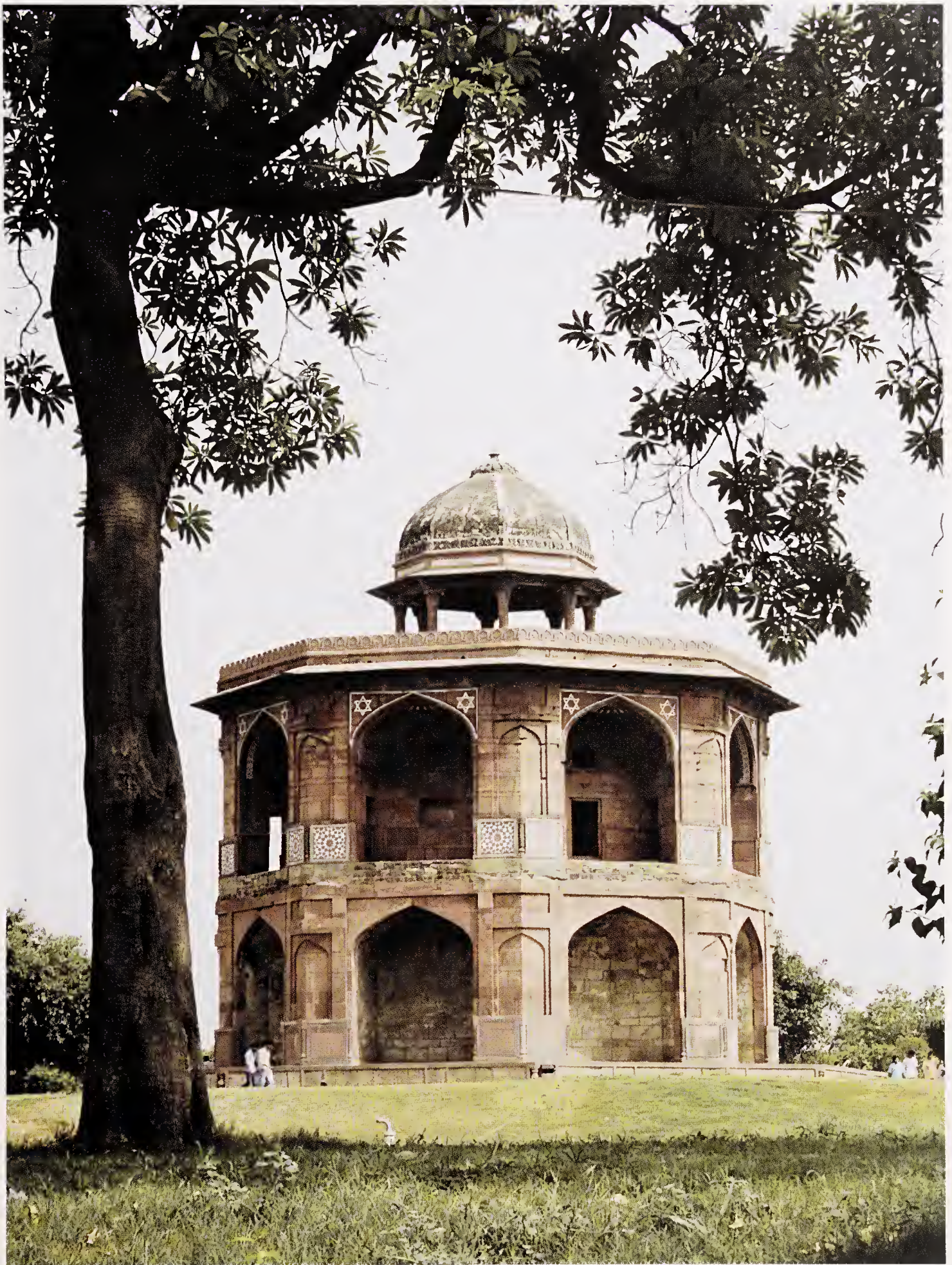
With the backing of the scriptural statement, one does feel more inclined to accept that version. The name Nigam Bodh Ghat, however has not been lost in oblivion even today. It continues to occupy a place of importance as all the national leaders of India have had their last rites performed there and their memorials raised there. The place has been made serene by vast lush green grounds beautified by floral beds.

A traveller called Sidi Ali who had come from Constantinople is stated to have visited the court of Humayun and was highly impressed by his generosity. He has described his generosity and courtesy in detail. He has recorded that the king not only made generous gifts of large sums of money and precious articles but even offered him the governorship of a place Kharcha which Ali could not accept as he owed responsibility to his own king and could not accept any position outside.

Humayun, deeply concerned about the well being of his guest requested him not to venture out and embark on his return journey during the rainy season. The rains were to last for a full three months and the roads were likely to be flooded. Ali had no option but to agree with the

king and stay. But the thoughtful king also realized that it was not wise to keep the guest idle for three long months. Humayun knew about his guest's knowledge of astronomy. To keep him engaged and also to let his own men gain some knowledge, he requested Ali to train his men in charting the course of the Sun and assist his astrologers in determining the point of the equator. Ali agreed and spent the rainy season in the king's court, accomplishing the work assigned to him, and then took leave of the emperor.

Some other travellers of Humayan's time have described him as "Darya-i-Dil", that is, a man whose generosity matches the vastness of the sea. An example of his greatness of heart and generosity is well illustrated in one incident of his life. Humayun had gone to Bengal to fight a battle to retain the parts of Bengal, which seemed to be slipping from the Mughal hold. He could have stayed for some more time to see that everything was settled but he hastened back even ignoring the rains. The reason for expediting his return was that he had established a good relationship with some of the Rajput kings of the neighbouring state of Rajasthan and had accepted one of the queens as his sister. The lady too cherished this relationship. Humayun having been accepted as a brother had promised his undying support to her. Her kingdom was in danger of being attacked and so she had called for Humayun's help for which he facing all the perils had undertaken that journey.



Pl. 69. Sher Mandal, Purana Qila.



Pl. 70. Humayun's Tomb.



On the journey, Humayun while crossing a flooded river, fell from his elephant. In those days there were men who used to carry water in large leather bags called masks and the carriers were known as *bhishtis*. One such *bhishti* happened to be at the river. He saw Humayun struggling for his life in the swollen river. This man jumped in and saved Humayun's life risking his own. Humayan felt highly grateful to the man and asked him to tell his reward. The man told the king that he would like to be the king for a day. Amazingly enough, the king accepted his demand. The *bhishti* was the king for a day but he wanted this most important event of his life to be commemorated and remembered, so he made a further request. He asked the king to issue a leather coin to commemorate the event. The generous Humayun did that too, for the water man.

Although Humayun got opportunity to live in the palace and the city of his fancy for a very short period, people enjoyed peace and calm because of the fine traits of king's character. It was not uncommon in those days for emperors to have their own mausoleum designed in their own lifetime. Humayun followed that trend of thought and had his own mausoleum designed.

He cherished the thought of peace and tranquility even in the afterlife. He chose a place close to the bridge of twelve arches and issued orders for the site to be prepared for his mausoleum and the construction

to begin. He checked the progress every day and used to climb the high tower of Sher Mandal constructed by Sher Shah within the fort of Dinpanah. One evening when Humayun was climbing down after inspection, the staff which he used to have for support and the king lost balance and tumbled down. He did not survive injuries caused by the fall and died soon after. Initially, he was buried at a place close by. Later, his body was shifted into the mausoleum, the completion of which was taken up by Bega Begam or Hagi Begam, his Persian wife and native of Khorasan.

Humayun's tomb (Pls. 70 & 71) which took nine years to complete is one of the most striking monuments of Delhi. It has been considered a precursor to the famous Taj Mahal of Agra (Pl. 72). The tomb has gilded roof and the interior was adorned with many paintings and a variety of precious stones. It was customary to appoint a caretaker for the tomb. Humayun's tomb also had one such caretaker. He not only looked after the upkeep but also handled the responsibility of distributing alms to the poor for which regular funds were assigned. He was supposed to enter the vault once a day to sweep and clean the main chamber. A cover of heavy brocade used to cover the main resting place and fresh fragrant flowers like jasmine, roses and other fragrant blossoms were placed on the cover every day. Besides the cover, the empire's armour was also placed there which was very valuable.

Although the gentle and kind hearted king had taken great care to consult the astrologers to ascertain the auspicious moment for laying the foundation of the city, it is ironical that he failed to derive any comfort at the city and the place of his dreams. When he returned to the fort of Dinpanah for the second time, he lived there for the short period of two years and nine months and met a tragic death. However, his generosity and gentle manners have undoubtedly immortalized him. The historians somehow have been reserved in their appreciation of Humayun's character just because he lost his throne to Sher Shah. He had suffered owing to the treachery of relatives who could have supported him. He had turned to Iran where he had hoped to retrieve some part of his father's territory but had failed. He were genial, sensible and civilized but failed because he lacked the ability to command in an age when severity or a king of harshness was the order of the day. Percival Spear was probably right when he described him as "a Mughal Stuart perhaps, a fair and fatal king."

Humayun's tomb, with its immense dome of white marble juxtaposed with red sandstone not only breaks the monotony but dominates the landscape of Delhi towards the south-east. It is a tribute of his wife to Humayun. The entire construction exemplifies the Persian influence of a high standard (Pls. 73-78). The dome of the tomb ranks amongst the best and it is perhaps the first of the garden tombs.

While recollecting the story of Delhi which was fondly called the Rome of Asia by some, we traversed vast areas strewn with ruins and monuments only to finally enter the portals of a glorious empire where we earlier witnessed a vast emptiness. It is a palace where once the grandeur of an empire existed and the ruler took pride in sitting on the Peacock Throne which was perhaps the envy of the world. The throne changed into a canopied throne of wood covered with thin gold plating as a substitute. Another throne of crystals which stood in this hall once, today adorns the Windsor Castle. What remains now is a marble seat, a symbol of the monarchy of the bygone eras.

The fifteenth century formed an interlude to the first two imperial eras and then a prelude to the Mughal empire. It was a time when Delhi had been relegated to the status of a mere provincial city which at times controlled only the areas around a couple of miles.

The successors of the Tughluqs were Sayyids and the Lodis who came and departed. Their imprints are left in the form of some monuments (Pls. 79-85). The days of strife and struggle lingered on till the Mughals took charge completely. During the Mughal empire Delhi was undoubtedly at its peak but was never entirely trouble free. Even after Babur took hold, there were vicissitudes witnessed by the city to which, of course it was accustomed.



Pl. 71. Another view of Humayun's Tomb.





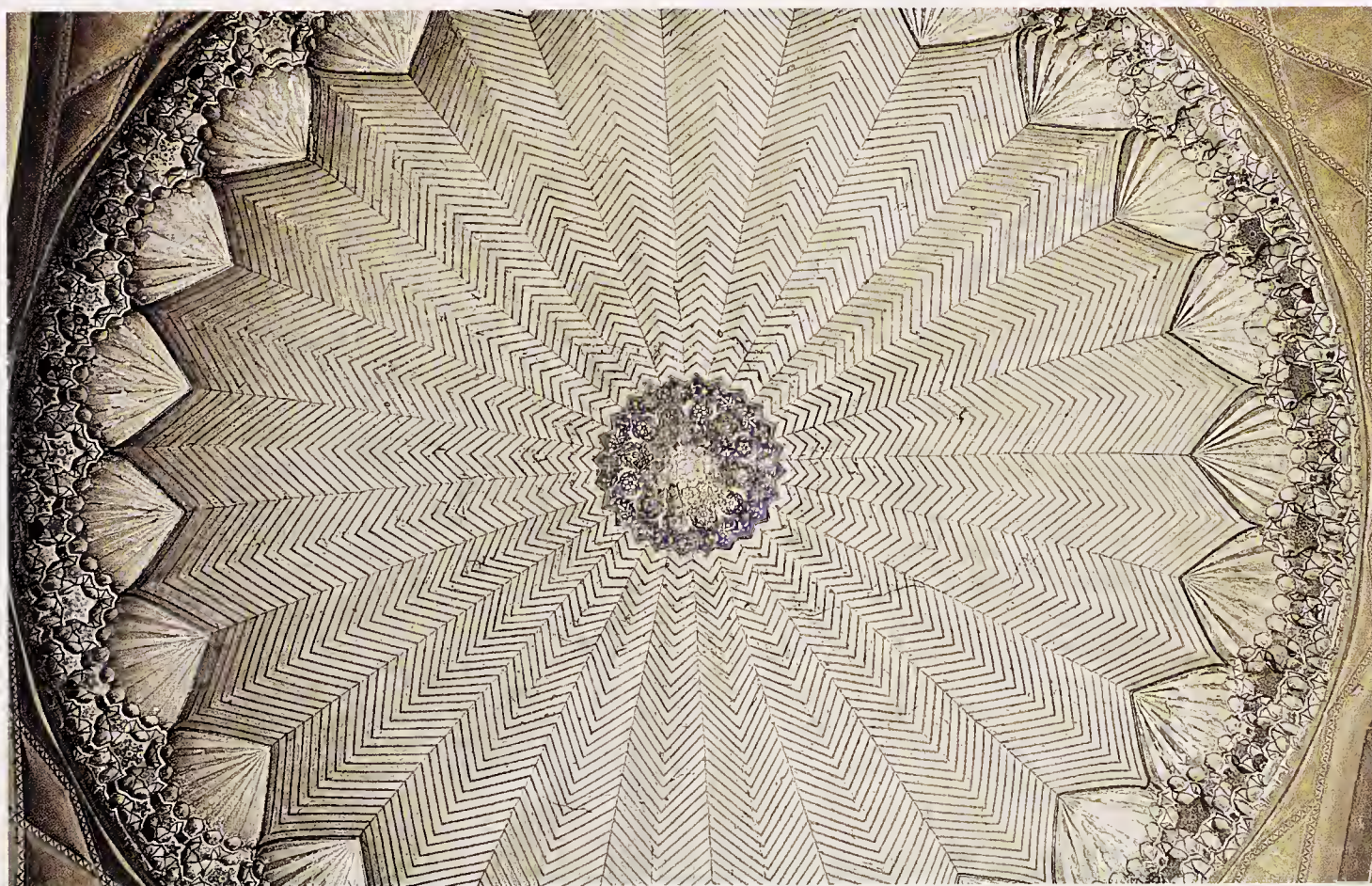
Pl. 72. Taj Mahal, Agra.

Amongst the Mughals, Humayun left without making much impact. Akbar made Delhi his capital for a period of eight years. He had been able to establish himself only after he defeated the Rajput king Hemu who had revived Hindu rule in Delhi for a short time and was known as Raja Vikramaditya. Akbar began with an eventful period. A very dear friend Atagha Khan (Pl. 86) was murdered by Akbar's foster brother Adham Khan who then rushed to Akbar's personal chambers to defend his action. Akbar, enraged, picked up Adham Khan and hurled him down from the balcony where he met an instant death (Pl. 87). Akbar then removed his foster mother, a very dominating and powerful lady.

Akbar's son, Jahangir rarely visited Delhi. In fact, Delhi regained its full status of a capital only when Shahjahan took command. Jahangir died on his way down from Kashmir. Two of his sons, Prince Khurram or Shahjahan and Prince Shahryar survived after Jahangir. Prince Khurram happened to be away in Deccan while Prince Shahryar being at Agra was in an advantageous position. They both contested the throne. Incidentally their wives too were closely related to each other. A major family feud ensued. Shahjahan who knew it would take time to reach Delhi sent his commanders with orders to execute all the male relatives. He ascended the throne after his ruthless actions. Tavernier, a French jeweller



Pl. 73. Facade of Humayun's Tomb.



Pl. 74. Inner view of the dome at Humayun's Tomb.



Pl. 75. Flooring at Humayun's Tomb.



Pl. 76. Close-up view of dome of Humayun's Tomb.



Pl. 77. Charbagh pattern in Humayun's Tomb.





Pl. 78. Jali work at Humayun's Tomb.

who visited India at that time has rightly remarked that Shahjahan's earlier actions have certainly tarnished his memory and he does not deserve any sympathy or pity for the fate he met during his last days.

The initial drama was enacted at Agra and the city of Delhi had remained a mute witness. The magnificence of Shahjahan's reign was in the glorification of the city of Agra from where the emperor was trying to rule the entire country, though he wasn't totally unaware of the inadequacies of not occupying the centre stage, Delhi. Shahjahan's wife was the famous Mumtaz Mahal. Mumtaz Mahal was a title bestowed upon her by Shahjahan. Her real name was Arjumund Bano Begum and she had one more title to her credit Nawab

Alia Begum. However, it was the title of Mumtaz Mahal, meaning the ornament of the palace, which gained popularity. Shahjahan married Mumtaz when he was twenty. He had two children by his first wife. It was Mumtaz who bore him 14 children, eight sons and six daughters. Shahjahan and Mumtaz loved each other passionately and she gave no chance for anything scandalous to happen so far as her husband's reputation was concerned. Most unfortunately she died during childbirth in AD 1631 at the age of 39 years. She was at Burhanpur at that time. Her body was laid there temporarily and was brought to Agra when her mourning husband left the Deccan. It was placed in a grave erected temporarily in the garden of the present Taj Mahal (Pl. 88). Shahjahan began construction



Pl. 79. Isa Khan's Tomb.

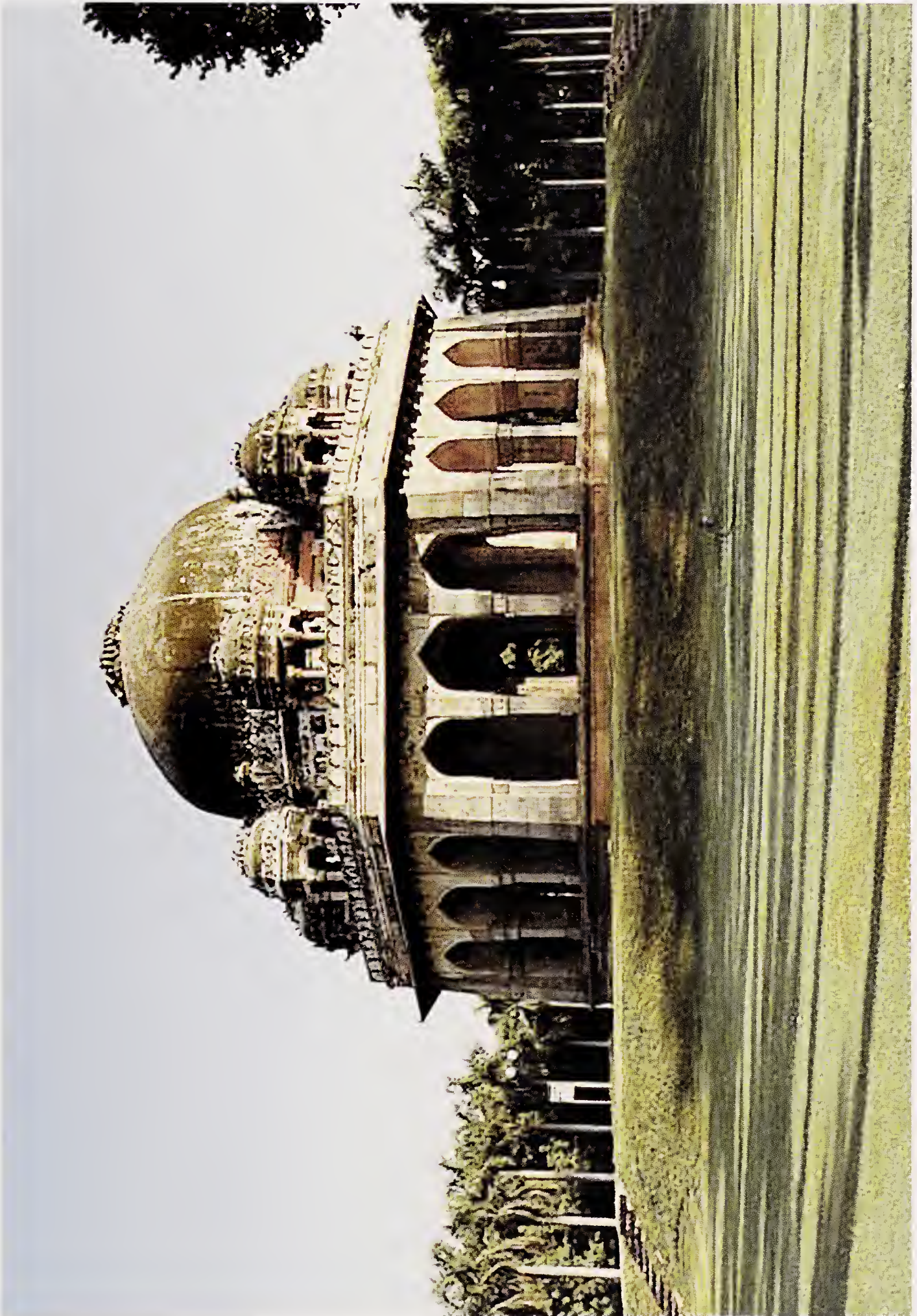


Pl. 80. Shish Gumbad, Lodi Garden.

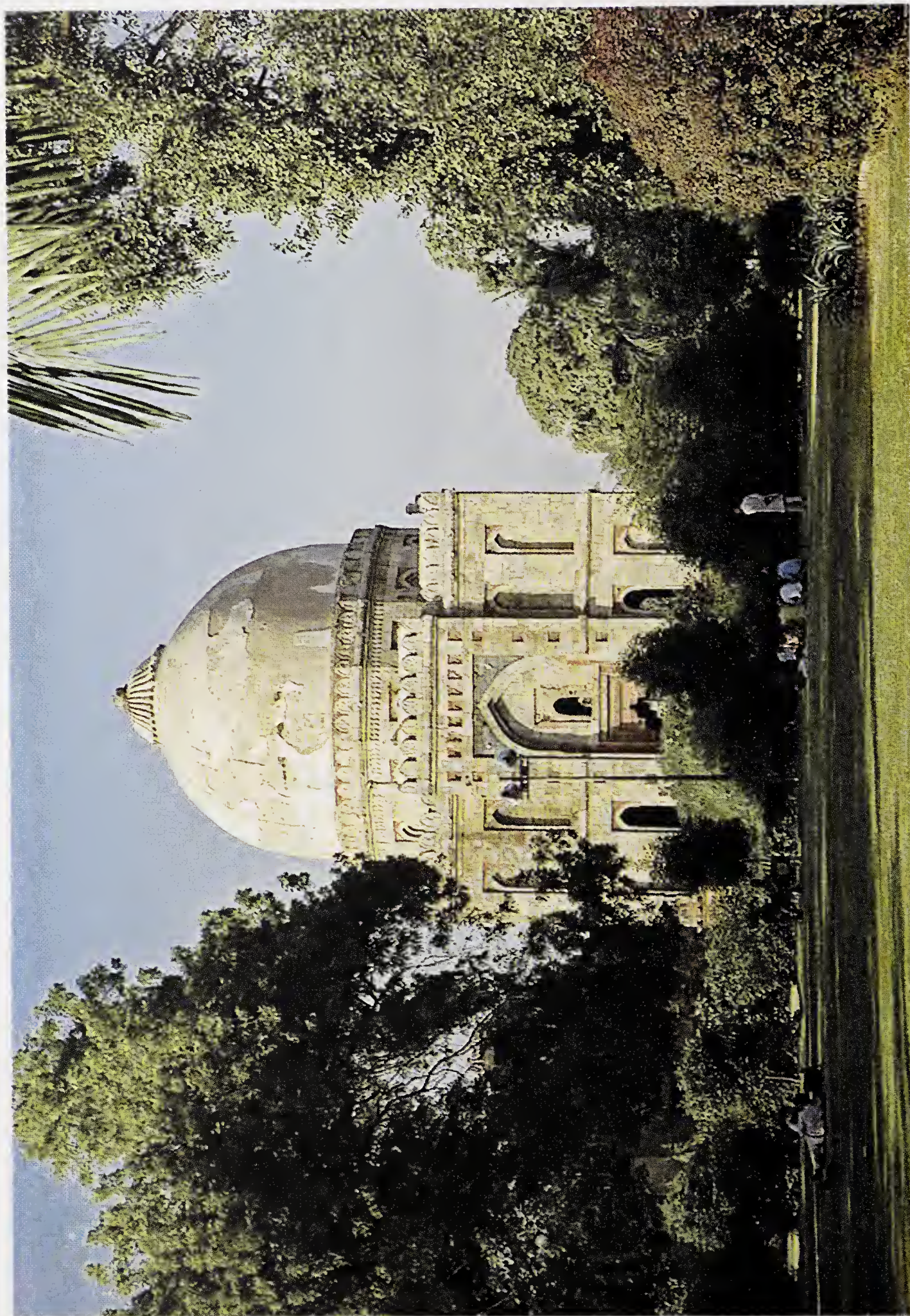




Pl. 81. Sikandar Lodi's Tomb, Lodi Garden.



Pl. 82. Muhammad Shah's Tomb, Lodi Garden.



Pl. 83. Bada Gumbad, Lodi Garden.



Pl. 84. A view of Bada Gumbad.



Pl. 85. Walls around Lodi Garden.



Pl. 86. Atagha Khan's Tomb.

of this unrivalled monument in AD 1632. The monument is not only amongst the eight wonders of the world, but also has immortalized the passionate love story of the two.

According to Tavernier who claimed to have seen it begin and finish, the completion of the whole complex of building gave employment to 20,000 workmen for 22 years at a time when the resources of the Mughal empire were scarce. The finest of the materials were used for its embellishment and the quality of the craftsmanship available in northern India at that time was perhaps superior to any other earlier period.

The Taj Mahal owes much of its style to Humayun's tomb (Pl. 89) in particular and to Khan-i-Khanan's tomb (Pl. 90) in general, both of which are in Delhi. The Taj stands on a white marble platform which is 6.7 meters in height and 95.4 meters square, at the far end of a large formal garden which is enclosed on three sides by lofty walls and gateways. On the fourth side, flows the River Yamuna. The structure of the Taj is built in the shape of a square with each of its four sides dominated by a deep recess 19.2 meters high, but its four corners slightly slanted to form what actually is an octagon. It is this slant perhaps which gives the effect of the entire structure, being suspended in air.



Pl. 87. Adham Khan's Tomb or Bhul-bhulaiya, Mehrauli.



Pl. 88. Taj Mahal, Agra.

The total height of the building, including the metal pinnacle mounted on the dome is 83.2 meters. Architecturally the most enduring impression which this unique monument leaves is that of its style being of Persian origin. This is considered to be a positive impression of the Safavid art form but in totality it should be considered a Mughal concept. Credit to the Mughals lies in their quality of decoration which presents almost a culmination of Persian form worked on Indian soil. A leading art historian Herman Goetz had described the Taj as the work in the best Safavid taste.

During the early years of his reign, Shahjahan had shown his preference for Agra, but it was after Mumtaz Mahal's death that he started feeling the effect of heat and dust excessively. The surroundings appeared rather dreary and he could not find solace anywhere.

While supervising construction of the Taj, Shahjahan paid attention to the repair and construction of some other buildings at Agra as well as at Delhi. His time and attention was divided between Delhi and Agra. That seems to be the time when he conceptualized and considered the idea of establishing a new city at Delhi. He was firmly established as an emperor and it was high time he earned world recognition as a ruler of Hindustan by building a new city. Having seen the monument completed to his satisfaction, Shahjahan took the final decision to shift his capital to Delhi.

Amongst the Mughals, Shahjahan has been considered a great planner. He visualized the city of Shahjahanabad with wide streets and parks. It was almost as if he was weary of crowd and dreary atmosphere at Agra and needed



Pl. 89. Humayun's Tomb.





Pl. 90. Khan-i-Khanan's Tomb, Nizamuddin area.



something on a splendid scale to cheer him up and distract his mind from the sadness which plagued him so often. Shahjahan commenced the work in AD 1638. He formed a team of competent officials who were entrusted the task of choosing architects, engineers and other specialized workers. Astrologers were consulted without fail. The first task taken in hand was to choose the site for the palace. The site had to be in pleasant and beautiful surroundings. The team of architects and engineers along with chief mason set out in search of a proper site.

The first choice was the land near the present Talkatora gardens but the chief mason rejected this for reasons of his own. The search began again. This time it was in the vicinity of the Raisina hills which became the hub of activity during the British period. But the chief mason disapproved that too. It was at the third attempt that the chief mason gave his approval.

This site was on the west bank of River Yamuna. One reason for this choice was obviously the easy availability of water. Since the river had receded a lot, this vast area was available for construction. If a reference has to be made to the oldest and most ancient site of the urban habitation, then this site was to the north of Indraprastha. The task, according to Bernier was supervised by Ali Mardan Khan, the Persian adventurer who had joined the emperor's service in AD 1637. The emperor performed the earth breaking ceremony with great fanfare,

probably on a larger scale than that of Humayun's. The two chief masons Ustad Hamid and Ustad Hira got the foundation dug but mysteriously disappeared after the digging ceremony. When informed, the king was naturally furious. A hunt was ordered but the duo was nowhere to be found.

Infuriated, the king issued orders for their arrest but before the orders could be carried out, both of them appeared before the king. When an explanation was demanded for their strange behavior, both of them apologized but said they had purposely disappeared because they wanted the dug up foundation to be subjected to a test through all the seasons of the year. By doing so they wanted to ensure the firmness and the consolidation of the soil to be able to support an everlasting building. Shahjahan was so pleased that after the completion of the fort he awarded them with a piece of land each near the famous Jama Masjid, allowing them to construct their own mansions. The localities named after them exist even today in the downtown. Ali Mardan Khan had supervised the construction of the Taj Mahal as well. Shahjahan had conferred on him the title of Nadir-ul-Asr which meant the wonder of the age. Bernier, who had been in the country for about nine years wrote extensively about the building of the city and the fort.

Shahjahan, the father of the grand Mughal Aurangzeb, to eternalize his memory, caused a town to be built contiguous to old Delhi, which he called after his name, Shahjahanabad.

He designed to make it his capital of the empire instead of Agra where he said that the summer heat was too violent. This nearness has occasioned that the ruins of old Delhi served to build a new city. Since the city of Shahjahanabad is not yet known amongst us, we intend to speak of it under the old name of Delhi, which is familiar to us. According to the *Mirut-i-Aftabnama*, this fortress of the then New Delhi was built at an expense of no more than fifty lakhs of rupees of that day, and the construction was for twenty years in progress. It was about one and a half miles in circumference.

According to the original plan of the Lal Qila or the Red Fort (Pls. 91-94),

starting from the Lahori Gate (Pls. 95-96), there were a number of buildings and courts, which were meant for public functions of the emperor. Along the top of the eastern wall, above the river were his private suits, In a line from north to south were the baths, the halls of private audience, the sleeping apartments and the Zenana, that is the ladies' chamber. The first line meeting the second at right angles formed a T-shaped arrangement. The western side of the space between the two arms of the 'T' was occupied with subsidiary courts and building of mundane use, like the kitchen and stores. On the northern side were the gardens called Hayat Bakhsh Bagh (giver of life) and Mehtab Bagh (garden of the moon) and adjoining the northern wall

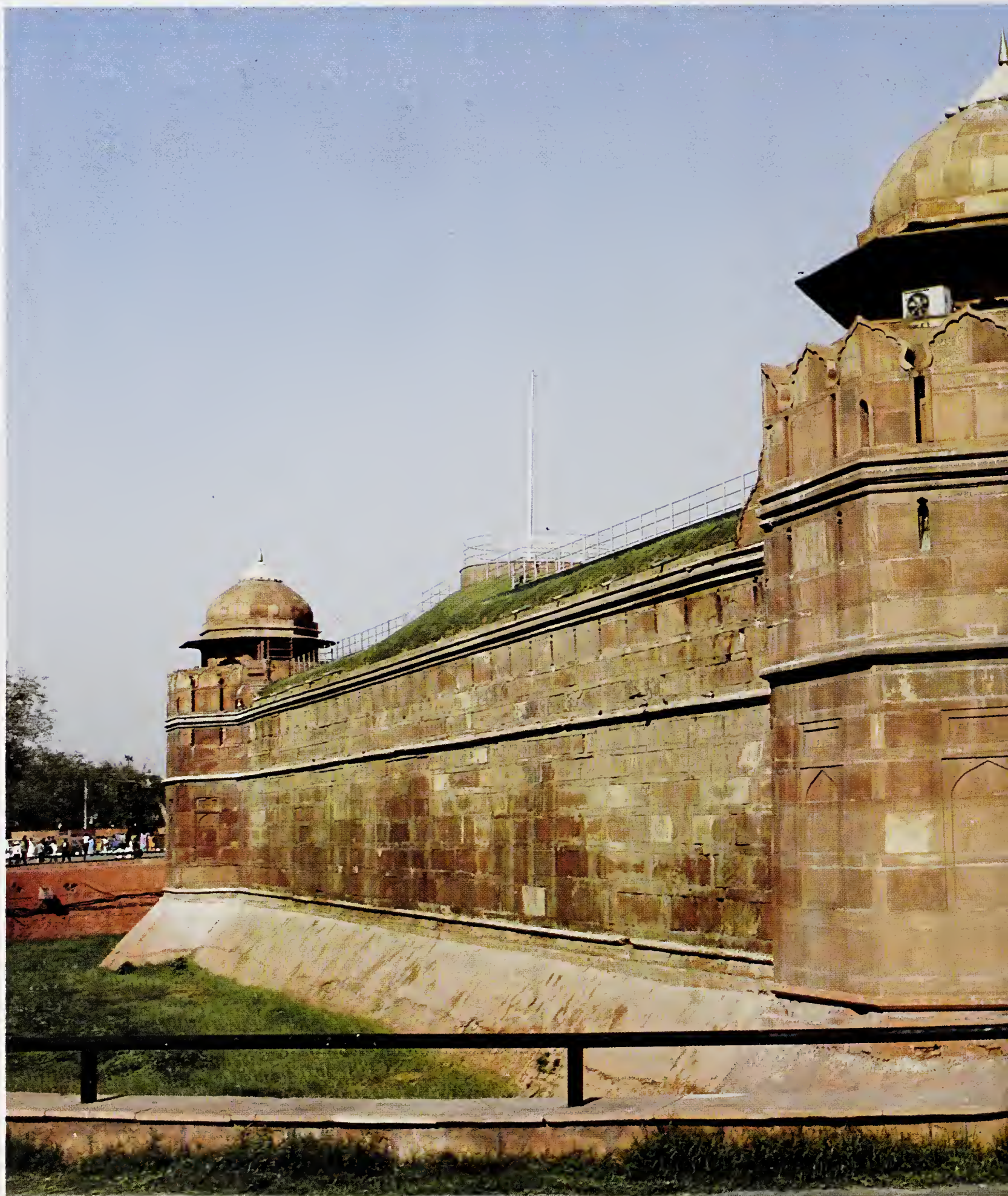


Pl. 91. Lal Qila.

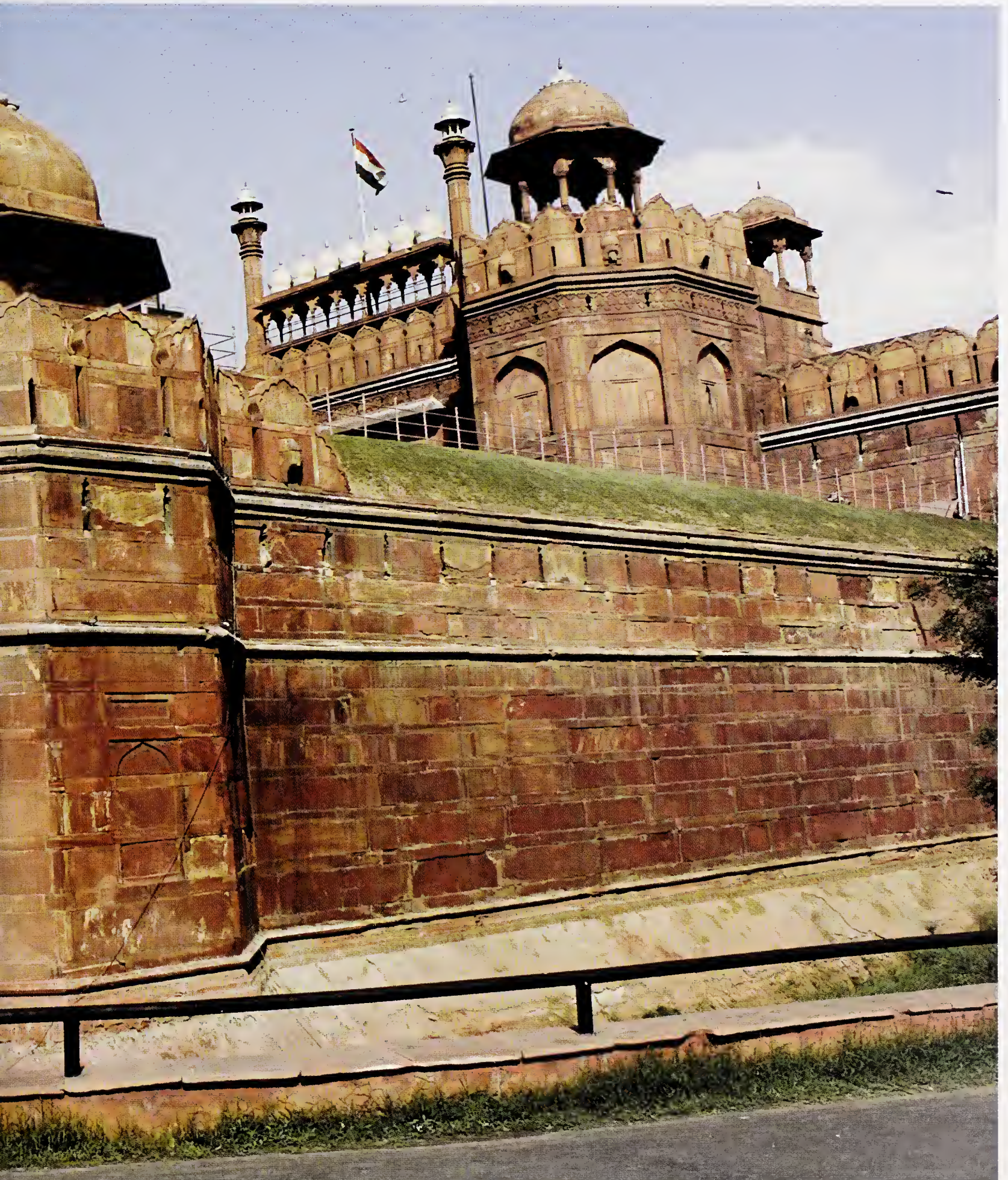


Pl. 93. A view of ramparts of the Red Fort.





Pl. 93. A view of ramparts and moat around Red Fort.





Pl. 94. Fortification Wall, Red Fort.





Pl. 95. A view of Lahori Gate, Red Fort.



Pl. 96. A recent view of Lahori Gate, Red Fort.



Pl. 97. Hayat Bakhsh Garden, Red Fort.

were the houses of the royal princes. The Hayat Bakhsh garden (Pl. 97) has been restored to a large measure. The fort had high, solid, encircling walls of red sandstone and the palace and the quarters inside the Red Fort were built facing the river. This ensured plenty of sun light and fresh air. This view to ensure light and air was followed by all other nobles of the court who built their houses and mansions along Darya Ganj and the area around the Kashmiri Gate.

The whole court was designed with utmost attention to every single detail. There were well laid out gardens for the royal complexes as well as for the mansions of the nobles. The line of the city wall was intercepted at different intervals by round towers. There was a musketry

parapet but no cannon was mounted. According to Bernier's account, no wall was originally built along the river side. In fact, the earlier city walls were mud walls. Shahjahan got the strong brick wall constructed later.

The entry to the palace was from the Lahori Gate side which had received much praise from the traveller who visited the city. After entry from the Lahori Gate side, comes Chhatta Chowk and the famous Meena Bazar (Pl. 98). The two main entrances (the other being Delhi Gate in the southern side, Pl. 99) have survived more or less in their original form or in the state in which Bernier saw them a couple of years after they were completed. These engaged the attention of the traveller for some special reason.



Pl. 98. Chhatta Chowk and Meena Bazar.



Pl. 99. Delhi Gate, Red Fort.

After having described the entries and the arrangement of defence, he details us about one of the gates known as the Naubat-Khana (Pls. 100 - 103). This was the gate which had a covered enclosure for the drummers and pipe musicians to sit and play music from time to time.

The portions of the chambers, housing the amenities for daily use and other areas of personal use were laid out with great care and with an eye for comfort. The baths were spacious, with a supply of scented water. The antechambers also used to be carpeted and had cushioned seats. The elaborate royal secretariat was divided into a number of departments. Another feature was a well organized factory manufacturing various kinds of articles of royal use thereby making the

fort self sufficient in every respect. These features never allowed the aesthetics to be spoilt or hampered by the beauty of the surroundings.

The garden, the Hayat Bakhsh Bagh, which always enhanced the beauty of the palace, had a special feature of its own. It had two building on both sides of the garden, known as Sawan and Bhadon (Pls. 104-105). Their placement and design, suggests that they were resorts for the rainy season where the royalty could enjoy the musical showers and the beat of the falling rain in their chambers.

A canal known as Nahr-i-Bihisht flowed through the fort. The lovely channels and cascades were inset with



Pl. 100. Naubat-Khana, Red Fort.



Pl. 101. A view of Naubat-Khana.



Pl. 102. Beautiful floral engraving inside Naubat-Khana.



Pl. 103. Beautiful flowers carved inside Naubat-Khana.

gems. The innumerable foundations within the palace enhanced the charm tremendously besides cooling the atmosphere. The royal and the princely buildings were richly ornamented with rare carpets and furnishings. A walk along with Bernier would apprise us of the full details of the halls of public and private audience. He proceeds to describe the royal halls in their full splendour: "Over again the great gate of the court, upon which is the 'Nagar kaney' (Nakkar-Khana), beyond the whole court, there is a great and stately hall with many ranks of pillars raised high, very airy, open on three sides, looking to the court, having its pillars and ground painted and gilded. In the midst of the wall which separates the hall from the 'Seraglio' there is an opening, a kind of a great window high and large, so high that a man cannot reach to it from below with his hand. There the king appears seated upon his throne, having his sons on his sides, and some eunuchs standing, some of which drive away the flies with peacock's tail, others fan him with great fans, others stand there ready with great respect and humility for several services. Thence he sees beneath him all the Omars, Rajas and ambassadors all of whom also stand upon a raised garden encompassed with silver rail with eyes downwards and their hands crossing their stomachs. Somewhat further off are the mansabdars or lesser officers also standing in the same posture and respect as Omars did; and somewhat further, in the remaining



Pl. 104. Sawan pavilion.



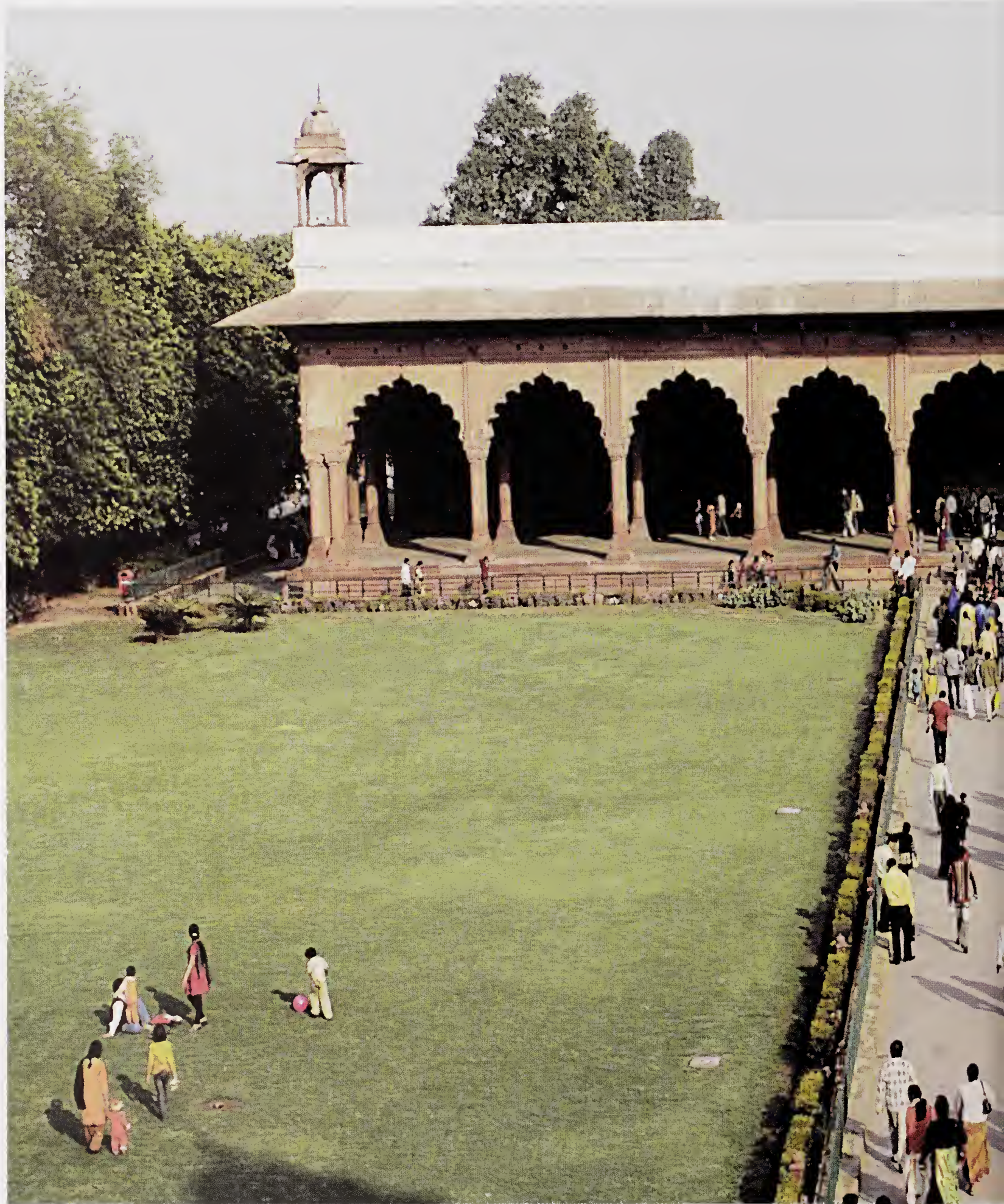
Pl. 105. Bhadon pavilion.

part of the hall and in the court, he sees a great crowd of all sorts of people. In this hall every day about noon the emperor gives a general audience to all which is the reason that great hall is called 'Am-Khas' that is place of audience or a place of meeting common to great and small."

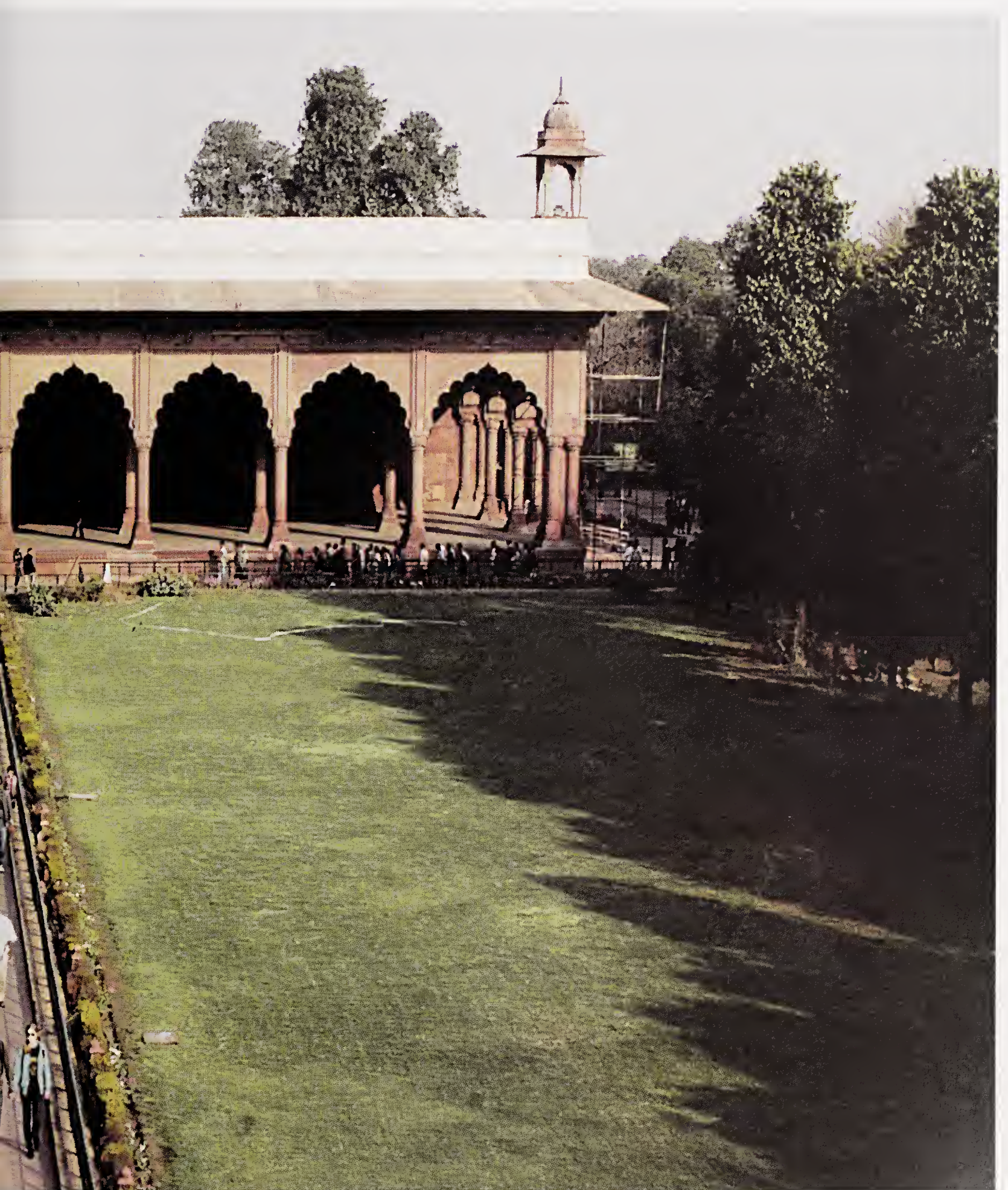
This hall of common audience was once surrounded on three sides by the rooms of the nobles. The building which housed the Diwan-i-Am or the hall of public audience was an open colonnaded building with rows of pillars and engraved arches (Pls. 106-107). The surface having lost its plaster and gilt is bare now. In the middle of the eastern side (closed by a wall now) is a recess in

which stands a high raised throne with a canopy of inlaid marble (Pl. 107a). It is known as the "seat of the shadow of God." Since this was the durbar of the emperor, most probably it was here that the famous Peacock Throne was placed. There was a dais in front from where the minister handed over the petitions. Tavernier, the French jeweller, on his personal inspection had assessed its value at nearly six and half a million sterling. Unfortunately, it was usurped and carried away by Nadir Shah when he ransacked Delhi.

Luckily, the paintings on the walls were spared and have withstood the ravages of time. Behind the throne on



Pl. 106. Diwan-i-Am, Red Fort.





Pl. 107. Collonades, Diwan-i-Am.



Pl. 107a. Marble throne inside Diwan-i-Am.

the wall of the recess are the well-known panels of *pietra dura* (Pls. 108-110). There is a controversy about the origin of these frescoes. They have generally been assigned to a French artist but John Marshall advanced a different view. He pointed out that since most of the material is Italian, it is very likely that they were designed and painted in Italy and brought to India.

Bernier in his description of the king in his full regalia said that the hall on formal functions was extended on its three sides by embroidered fabric supported on silver covered pillars, the nobles stood below the throne, and the emperor himself appeared beneath the

marble canopy. To the east of it was another court, almost adjacent to the monarch's private apartments. This space formed a kind of passage through which the king passed to the place of his public business. Even it was made resplendent by enclosing it on three sides with arches and buildings. There was a tank in the centre. Now, the buildings have gone and the tank remains dry. The thoughtful planners have placed a basin (seemingly a part of the earlier fountain) in the centre, the exquisite workmanship of which makes the visitors marvel at the excellence of the craftsmanship of those days. The central building where the two lines join stands the Rang Mahal or the colourful hall (Pl. 111). The remains of



Pl. 108. Beautiful *pietra dura* work, *Diwan-i-Am*.



Pl. 109. Beautiful pietra dura work, *Diwan-i-Am*.



Pl. 110. Beautiful pietra dura work, Diwan-i-Am.



Pl. 111. Rang Mahal.



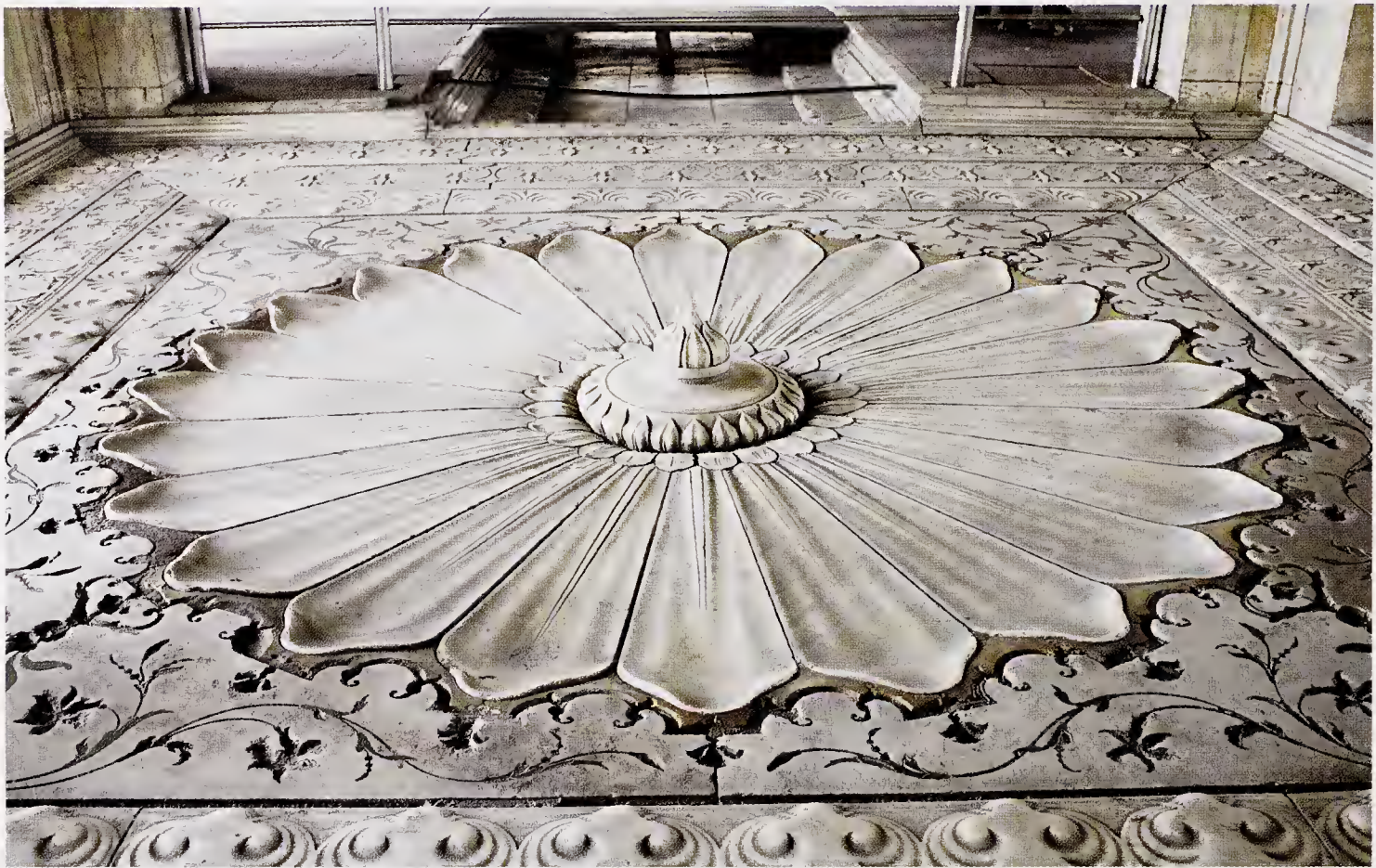
Pl. 112. Muntaz Mahal.



Pl. 113. Shah Burj.



Pl. 114. Diwan-i-Khas, Khas Mahal and Rang Mahal (from left to right).



Pl. 115. The exquisitely carved basin with the ivory fountain in its centre in line with Nahr-i-Bihisht, Rang Mahal.

the profuse adornment have survived as a sample of the earlier workmanship. To the southern side is the Mumtaz Mahal (Pl. 112). Some of the ladies' apartments used to be around these buildings. A number of them have disappeared. Between the buildings of the north and the south, the remains of the water channel known as the Nahr-i-Bihisht are still visible. In fact, this channel was the delight of the entire complex in the original set up. This channel entered the palace from under the Shah Burj (Pl. 113), supplied water for the baths, meandered down the Diwan-i-Khas, the sleeping apartments or Khas Mahal, and the Rang Mahal (Pl. 114). As if playing pranks, it sometimes flowed under the

marble floor and sometimes welled into the inlaid basins. Its ripples on the marble floor created a kind of soft effect and added charm and coolness to the entire surroundings (Pl. 115). Towards north of the Rang Mahal was the most private of the emperor's apartments which he used either for very private consultations or for undisturbed sleep (Pls. 116-119).

The next building of much consequence is the building which housed Diwan-i-Khas, the hall of private audience (Pls. 120-123). It is oblong shaped, pierced by engraved arches and broken by a deep drip stone and a plain kiosk at each corner. The interior as well as the



Pl. 116. Khas Mahal : a view from the west the dome of Muthamman Burj is seen at the top (Ring Road in the background).



Pl. 117. Another view of the Khas Mahal from south-west.



Pl. 118. Beautiful marble screen at the south end of Khas Mahal.



Pl. 119. The Scale of Justice carved on the marble screen.

outer side of this hall is an exquisite example of Mughal art. The silver ceiling which once adorned this hall has gone to Persia. But, there still pervades a kind of subdued magnificence, enough to justify the repeated inscription on the upper portion of the panel: "If there is a heaven on the face of the earth, it is this, it is this, it is this."

To the west of this portion lies the Hayat Bakhsh Bagh and to the south of it are the marble pavilions from which the garden was supplied with water cascading over the niches to hold the candles behind the streams. To the west of this wonderful relic of the Mughals i.e. the Red Fort stands the grand Jama Masjid (Pls.124-125) of the same

period. This entire building is built on a raised ground and supported on a high plinth. The three broad flights of steps lead to the three gates east, north and south which enhance the effect of the solid structure. The architect has tried to produce a harmonious whorl cut of a square austere exterior. This mosque can house 10,000 people at a time.

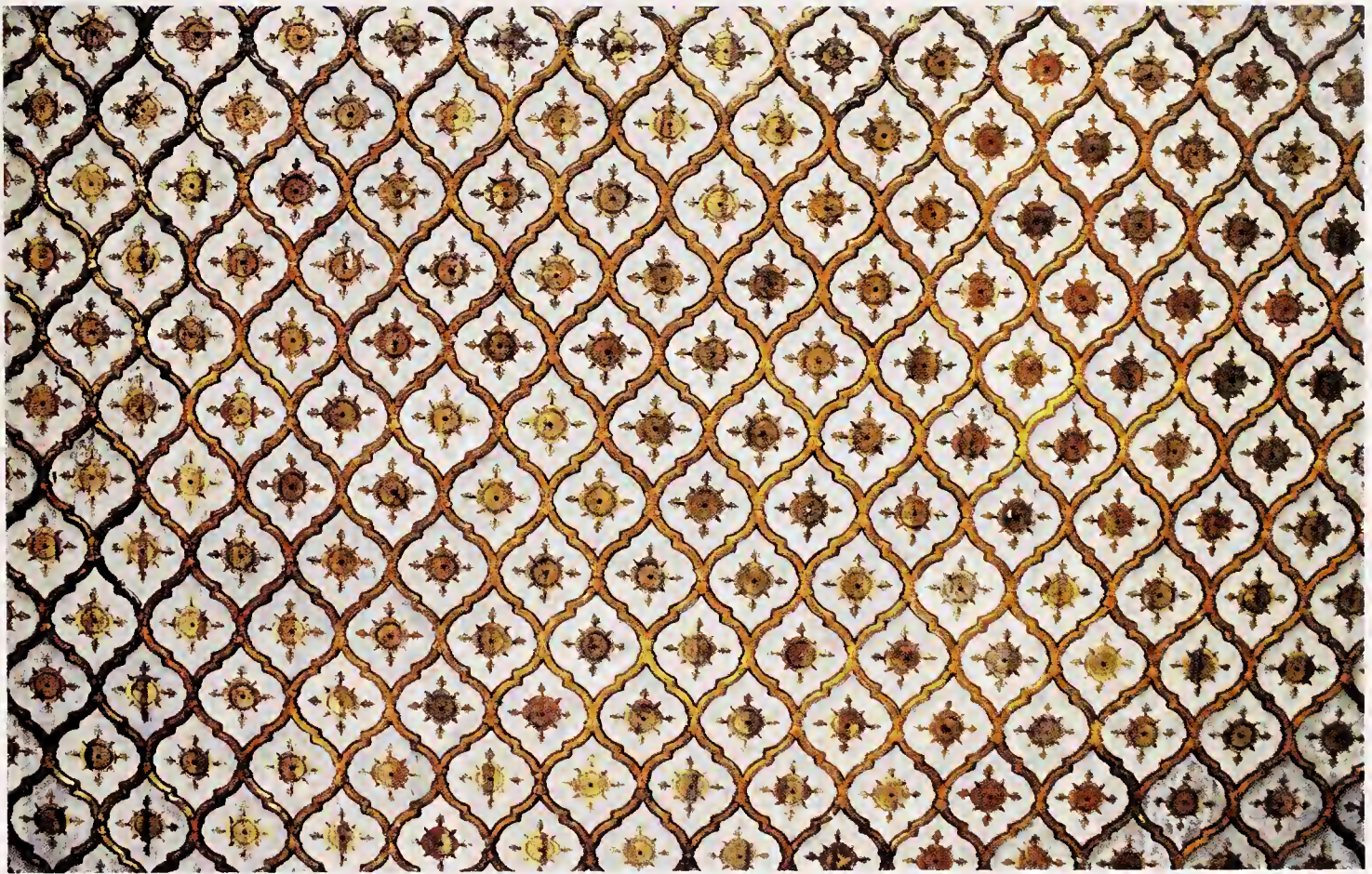
The daily reception of Diwan-i-Am indeed must have been a glittering ceremony but its special splendour on occasions like the birthday of the emperor, the birth of a prince or princess and the recovery of the emperor from an illness were exceptional. Shahjahan's accession to the throne was a celebration unique in its grandeur.



Pl. 120. Diwan-i-Khas.



Pl. 121. Another view of Diwan-i-Khas.



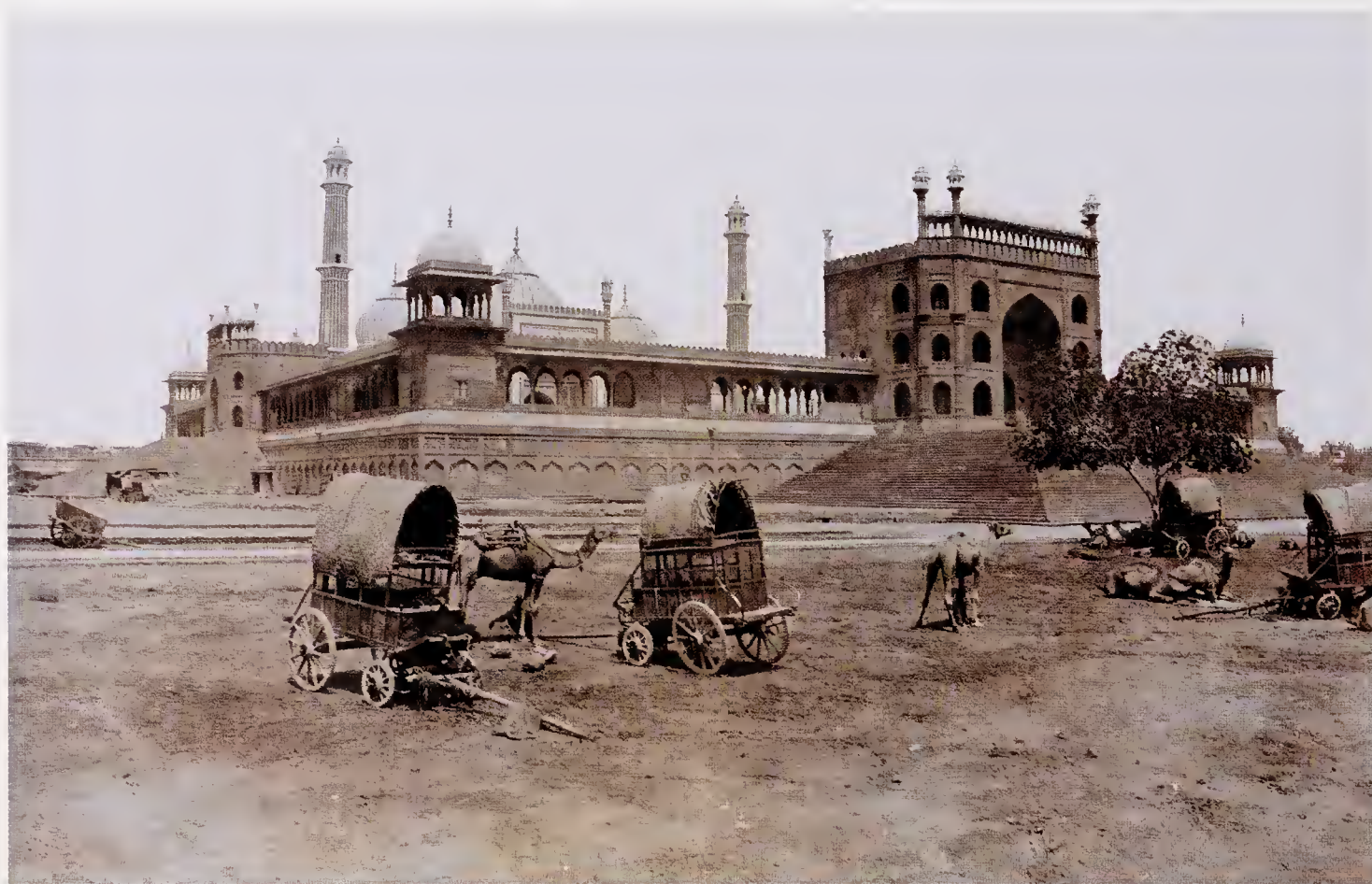
Pl. 122. Ceiling, Diwan-i-Khas.



Pl. 123. Beautiful decoration, Diwan-i-Khas.



Pl. 124. An old view of Jama Masjid.



Pl. 125. Another old view of Jama Masjid.

The king, according to Bernier's account, held a regular appraisal of his troops and decided the promotions or dismissals without much delay. Apparently, he had fixed days for certain kinds of petitions. On days when he heard the petitions from a certain class, the person concerned would be asked to present himself in the court and the king dispersed the petition on the spot. On other days when he had to hear the petition of selected persons, of whom ten were chosen, the king used to devote two hours in a private chamber and deliver his judgment. In such case not all the ten people would be present. The grievance was presented by one old man from the group of them from the lower classes. According to Bernier, the king attended the court of justice, called Adalat-Khana, once a week. The two chief judges who assisted the king were always present.

It seems very peculiar, but the king has a chamber connected with the Diwan-i-Am which was called the Ghusal-Khana, which meant a wash-room. The king permitted very few persons to enter this. Though the place was meant for a wash, the hall was spacious, well painted and gilded. There was a raised platform for the king to sit and confer with the chiefs. The baths occupied an important place in the Mughal palaces. Elaborately built and decorated, these were used for transacting business as well. There being no air conditioners those days, the coolness or the heat

generated according to the seasons in those rooms came as an advantage. The other important monuments inside the Red Fort include Moti Masjid (Pls. 126-127) which was built by Aurangzeb and Zafar Mahal (Pl. 128) built by the last Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar to name a few.

Shahjahan, the monarch who sat on the Takht-e-Taus, the Peacock Throne, knew of the judicious use of reward and punishment. On special occasions the king bestowed rewards which were of many kinds and according to the ranks. Rewards were in the form of money, jewellery, weapons, houses and elephants. The commonest present used to be the Khalat, a robe of honour with gold thread embroidery and gems. There were titles also which were conferred for the reward of faithful and honourable services. These included Khan-i-Khana, Khan-i-Jahan, and Nizam-ul-Mulk. This was the arrangement and the glory of the Red Fort.

The city of Shahjahanabad was in circumference surrounded on three sides by high massive walls with a board parapet. At various points in the wall there were huge gates. In some records, thirteen city gates have been mentioned but Bernier who spent a long time in the city has recorded ten city gates giving their names and locations. They were :

The Calcutta Gate to the northeast,

The Kashmiri Gate to the north (Pls. 129-131),



Pl. 126. Moti Masjid.



Pl. 127. Moti Masjid (inside).



Pl. 128. Zafar Mahal.



Pl. 129. Kashmiri Gate.



Pl. 130. An old view of Kashmiri Gate.



Pl. 131. An old photograph of Kashmiri Gate.



Pl. 132. Ajmeri Gate.



Pl. 133. Kashmiri Gate.

The Mori Gate to the north,
The Kabuli Gate to the west,
The Lahori Gate to the west,
The Farsh Khana Gate to the west,
The Ajmeri Gate to the southwest (Pl. 132),
The Turkman Gate to the south (Pl. 133),
The Raj Gate to the east,
The Dilli Gate to the southeast (Pl. 134).

The factors which were considered important in the selection of the site were of course the necessity of its being close to the river and to the raised ground so that the city did not suffer during the floods. Both these factors were taken care of and the site on the right bank of the river being considerably safe from floods had been selected. Besides, it had the added advantage of being protected by two rocky hills Jhojla and Bhojla which were on the north side of the Aravalli mountains.

This city was always admired for being very well-planned. Shahjahan had made use of Hindu architecture and the science of town planning. The main books available about knowledge on town planning were the *Vastusastra* and the *Silpasastra*. The shape on which the city was planned, was known as the *karmuka*, representing the shape of a bow and arrow. The area between the north and south roads connecting Akbarabad, Kashmiri Gate including Faiz

Bazar is considered to represent the bow string. Similarly, the city gate between south to east along with Lahori Gate, Turkman Gate and Ajmeri Gate are said to represent the carved shaft of the bow. Though the idea is highly fascinating, it is difficult to ascertain as to what extent the plan conformed to the idea.

According to this plan, the most auspicious spot was the junction of two significant cross streets, where in Hindu towns the temples to Lord Vishnu or Siva were built. Shahjahan chose this spot for his palace which happened to be the meeting point of Faiz Bazar and Chandi Chowk (Pl. 135). The two major thoroughfares in Shahjahanabad were the main sources of bazars as well, where the streets were lined with shops of merchants, artisans, jewellers and all such businessmen. The largest and the richest of these commercial avenues stretched from Lahori Gate of the fort to the Fatehpuri mosque (Pl. 136). This avenue was built by the king's favorite daughter Jahanara Begum who was popularly known as Begum Sahib. The streets were 12 meters wide and 1390 meters long and contained 1560 shops and porticos. Nahr-i-Bihisht flowed in the centre.

In the earlier accounts, there was no name given to bazars but it was later that the bazaars were divided into several sections and each of them was given a separate name. One section, which was 146.3 meters long and stemmed from Lahori Gate of the fort side to the Kotwali



Pl. 134. Dilli Gate.





Pl. 135. A view of Chandni Chowk.

Chabutra (police station) in the square, was called the Urdu Bazaar. This bazar was for the exclusive use of imperial householders who lived in and around the palace fortress and were supposed to accompany the emperor when he toured the country side. Darya Ganj, a colony on the river side was the area where the Amirs lived. The section from the Kotwali platform, where criminals were tried in public, to the point of the Chowk, the 146.3 meters long street was called Asharfi Bazaar, that is the jeweller's market. This square, octagonal in shape with its sides 30.5 meters long had a central pool which used to look beautiful in moonlight, hence the name Chandni Chowk. Over the years this name displaced all other names. The Fatehpuri area was constructed by one of the consorts of the king called Fatehpuri Begum.

Chandni Chowk was a flourishing trade centre. Traders of various countries found it to be a prestigious trade centre. There were shops selling fruits from Afghanistan and Kashgar, jewellers displaying ornaments of rare gems, inlaid work design and ornaments of exquisite enamelled workmanship from Rajasthan. The wine shops were well stocked with quality wine. The gold and silk brocades from Varanasi and Surat were not only much admired but were very much in demand at home as well as abroad.

While the vendors sat under the shady trees selling their items with songs

which they delighted in composing for each fruit, the jewellers had agents who communicated with customers and promoted business. It is interesting to know that the use of coffee was very much in vogue even in those days. The fashion of 'Kahva' said to have arrived from Persia at that time was patronized by the Amirs and nobles. There was Kahva Khanas where sat the nobles, the rich, the intellectuals and scholars who with sips of coffee enjoyed reciting their poetry and Urdu couplets inviting appreciation from the nobility around.

Francois Bernier who came to India in AD 1663 spoke about Chandni Chowk as the most important commercial centre of the east. Foreign visitors marvelled at the abundance and quality of rubies, sapphires, emeralds and pearls. The sapphires were described as emitting a glow that spread all around.

The hot and dry climate put a premium on places which could bring relief for the people. People liked shaded areas with trees, running water and drinking water. Landscaping with flowers and gardens was emphasized so that any passer-by could derive solace and relax. Shahjahan loved laying out gardens throughout the city which besides being a source of comfort were also the lungs of the city.

The basic pattern, followed for the gardens was that of a triangle, both inside as well as outside the city. The gardens were very spacious, the



Pl. 136. Fatehpuri Masjid.



common size being of 122 meters by 183 meters. They used to be enclosed within high walls with gates. The gardens had pools and fountains and a baradari or a summerhouse.

Shahjahan's daughter Roshanara Begum too imbibed this love for nature and had a beautiful garden laid out near Lahori Gate which used to be a suburb at that time. After her death, she was buried in that garden. Another fine garden was laid out by one of the consorts of the king who was named Nawab Akbarabadi Begum. This garden is designed like the Shalimar Garden of Kashmir and was called by the same name. No trace of these gardens remain now but the areas still carry the names to perpetuate the memories. Shahjahan had not overlooked the water problems that always plagued this city. The precedent of extensive canals laid out by Firuz Shah was revived with further extension and care.

The most delightful and useful was the canal known as Nahr-i-Bihisht. It was an impressive display of engineering skill. This canal carried water from a point at river Yamuna which was 120 kilometers upstream and was brought to the city by a circuitous route. The first section of this canal built by Sultan Firuz Shah Tughluq had silted up over the years and had ceased to flow. Shahjahan ordered it to be dug and got repaired the entire waterway up to the point reached earlier which was somewhere near Hissar.

Construction of a further segment was ordered and the channel directing water from Hissar via Sonapat brought water now to the northwestern suburb of Shahjahanabad. This covered a distance of about 124 kilometers. Arches and bridges were constructed to direct the water. This kind of water system brought agricultural prosperity. The canal ran in every part of the city around the moat, into the palaces of the Princes and Amirs, to Chandni Chowk, Pahar Ganj and even the lanes and bylanes to make water available even to the poorer section without much trouble.

The emperor had many good institutions built and the location of each one of them was very thoughtfully planned. Around the Jama Masjid was Darul Baga, a charitable institution for the poor and a medical institution called Darul Shafa where free medical care was offered to the travellers, visitors and the poor.

Shahjahan like other great kings had given patronage to various scholars, artists, poets, and men of wisdom. There was a galaxy of eminent poets both in Persian and the vernaculars. Khwaja Mirdaud was a renowned poet of that time. Waliullah and Anandram Mukhlis were the two prominent figures in the field of literature. The emperor's patronage extended to all ranks and that was totally unbiased. He gave patronage to astrologers too. His court astrologer was a Hindu. Shahjahan had

great faith in him and consulted him before undertaking any important task or journey.

The splendour of the empire had attracted many craftsmen and artisans who settled in Shahjahanabad. The production of fine cotton fabric had won great acclaim. There were excellent chintz, quilts and tie and dye fabrics which earned wide appreciation. The copper goods and utensils, weapons, paper and leather goods were also excellent.

The stone cutters and masons of Delhi enjoyed a high reputation. In fact, Nadir Shah was so struck with their craftsmanship that he chose to carry 300 masons, 100 stone-cutters and 200 carpenters from Delhi. He is stated to have forced some of the writers also to go with him.

Shahjahan always accorded patronage to men of learning and to great scholars. His library contained a large number of Arabic and Persian books. An ability to write well, to be able to prepare documents, to compose poems and to use appropriate couplets during conversation was an essential qualification for an official to be in the court's service.

Bernier speaks with delight about Shahjahan's accession to the throne and the grandeur of the court: "The king appeared seated on his throne, at the end of the great hall, in the most magnificent attire. His vest was of

white and delicately flowered satin with silk and gold embroidery of the finest texture. The turban of gold cloth had an aigrette whose base was composed of diamonds of an extraordinary size and value besides an oriental topaz which may be pronounced unparalleled exhibiting a lust like the sun. A necklace of immense pearls, suspended from his neck, reached to his stomach in the same manner as many of the Gentiles wear their strings of beads. The throne was supported by six massive feet, said to be of solid gold, sprinkled over with rubies, emeralds and diamonds. I cannot tell you with accuracy the number of the value of this vast collection of precious stones because no person may approach sufficiently near to reckon them or judge their water or clearness; but I can assure you that there is a confusion of diamonds as well as other jewels and the throne to the best of my recollection is valued at four crores of rupees. I observed elsewhere that a lakh is one hundred thousand rupees and that a crore is a hundred lakhs. So the throne is estimated at by the father of Aurangzeb for the purpose of displaying immense quantity of precious stones accumulated successively in the treasury from the spoils of ancients Rajas and Pathans and the annual presents to the monarch which every Omar is bound to make on certain festivals. The construction and the workmanship of the material along with the two peacocks covered with jewels are well conceived and executed. They

were made by a workman of astonishing powers, a Frenchman by birth, who, after defrauding several of the princes of Europe, by means of false gems which he fabricated with peculiar skill sought refuge in the great Mughal's court, where he made his fortune." According to some other accounts, the cost of the throne had been estimated at rupees 18 crores.

The emperor signified the occasion by lavish gifts to his subordinates, his subjects and friends. A grand banquet was held after the ceremony. The feasting is said to have lasted for ten days. The magnificence surrounding the emperor brought unparalleled glory to the Mughal empire. Whatever may be said about Shahjahan's efficiency as a

ruler or about his personal character, there can be no dispute about the fact that his reign marks the climax of the Mughal empire.

The art and architecture of Shahjahan's reign is of the highest quality. It is ironic that an emperor who brought so much fame and glory to the Mughal dynasty and to the perpetual capital of Delhi should have been dealt such a blow at the hand of fate to have died in strict confinement. But was it history repeating itself? Prince Khurram, the magnificent Emperor Shahjahan of later years had rebelled against his father Jahangir. Shahjahan had to live in imprisonment when his own son Aurangzeb rebelled against him.



Postscript

There was a movement which characterized a kind of restlessness, propelled by which men advanced in different directions to explore and capture new frontiers. It was that movement which brought the Franks, Hans and Goths to the Mediterranean shore, destroyed many places, conquered many and caused change in major parts of the world. But this movement had not affected India. The invasions of Alexander or Seleucus did not leave any lasting impact on this country. The Greco-Bactrian invasions, piercing into the interiors of northwest India did influence the social and cultural patterns in a very small way.

The invaders poured into India through the Bolan, Gomal and Khyber passes at different times affecting different parts of the country. But the land between the ridge and the River Yamuna, cherished by monarchies right from the time of the glorious Indraprastha had remained more or less calm till a Prophet in one part of the world preached the maxim of conquest. It was that which brought the armies of Islam to this part of the land through various routes.

The earliest invaders were Turks and Afghans who made many forays. Muhammad of Ghur conquered Delhi in twelfth century AD. He was followed by the Turkish and the Pathan dynasties. The Slaves, the Khaljis, the Tughluqs,

the Sayyids and the Lodhi. Subsequent to all came the Mughals. Mongols who had caused much trouble to earlier dynasties by their frequent invasions were quelled earlier.

The city of Delhi buffeted by monarchies and dynastic change still preserves glimpses of strange vicissitudes and shadows of past memories. The last in the link of cities, but the most splendid of all, the city of Shahjahanabad remains epitomized in the Red Fort. It lingers still in the culture, the style and the ways of living, the way of interacting and relating to each other, in the field of scholarship and in that something which makes every resident of the city proclaim with pride that he is a Delhiwalla, a Delhi-ite.

It wasn't the wealth, splendour and prosperity alone, which attracted men of consequence, men of learning. But, since all those finer elements have rolled under the carpet of a swiftly changing material culture, it is only the Red Fort and other monuments which perpetuate the memories of that era or may be the poetic verses of the last of the Mughal, Bahadur Shah Zafar which echo the sentiments, the agony of loss. The glory has not remained unsung. Practically every sensitive tourist to this part of the world, right from the time of Bernier has written about this place.

The city had a character of its own, of which the prominent traits were mutual

respect and sharing of cultural nuances in which the last rulers, the British, also participated. They appreciated the feel, the delicacy of finer aspects of the Urdu language and the *tahzeeb*, the etiquette which was an integral part of the language and the culture. One of the great poets of Delhi once said, "The city is aesthetically pleasing. The streets are not mere streets. They are like the album of a painter" and nothing could describe the entire vicissitude more aptly than this simile of an album. Yes, it is an album but of a voluminous nature. Turning the pages of this great album can be an absorbing as well as a fascinating pastime. In this album, one not only views the different monarchies who fought and won this city of Delhi, thus proudly asserting their claim to the entire country, but could also glimpse the history of vaster field outside Delhi and outside the country.

After the dwindling stability offered by the last of the Mughals, the city passed through a quick change of hands, leading to shattering of city and the life within it. There were inevitable changes in the names of the localities, changes in the trade pattern and may be a few others but they all remained at an superficial level and could not overshadow the tranquil memories of the past.

Nothing was able to erase the character of the city and Bernier would surely

have recognized the city even after the British had taken over. The disparities noticed by Bernier and corroborated by Forbes have remained, undoubtedly and are probably on the increase. Yet the endeavour to cling to the spirit of the past was apparent. In the mansions of the descendants of royalty, pushed into the dark alleys by a city bursting at its seams, one can still glimpse the style and riches of the past.

The palatial mansion of Begum Samra, now called Bhagirath Palace, houses a market complex, but that cannot erase the memory of a lady said to be "uncommonly beautiful and wondrously intelligent." Begum Samra was a shrewd diplomat who, though a slave girl, rose to the status of being the 'beloved daughter of the emperor and the pope.' Bought by Sombre or Samra as he came to be called later, the Begum was quick to discern and comprehend and had an uncanny knack for quitting her husbands, lovers and friends in the political circle, which was wide indeed.

Soon after her marriage to Sombre, who was in the defence services of a Maharaja in the state of Rajasthan, the Begum took a significant decision to embrace Christianity. Sombre believed in changing horses according to the opportunities. Soon he was in the service of another Maharaja, the Scindias of Gwalior State. His fortune was on the upswing and was awarded

a big jagir. The Begum now was a princess in her own right, with an army at her command. Sombre died soon and Begum Samra was anxious to develop roots in the community, which of course she did. She was a force to reckon with. There were many who craved for her attention and favours, amongst which were Frenchmen, the British and others. After Sombre, she married a French army man and then another. One more beautiful, palatial mansion of a western style was built by her French lover. It still stands, on a high plinth with long wide steps. Begum Joanna Samra sits with dignity in one of the large canvasses. This petite diamond studded woman sits on a low chair with a many-looped hookah, dressed in aristocratic Mughal style. The Begum had allies in every camp and had taken a great interest in the affairs of Delhi. Also she had decided the destiny of many, favouring some and tricking others with great tact. Delhi certainly cannot forget her.

The new golf course in one of the posh areas of New Delhi is another spot which holds the shadows of a romance of the time of the last Mughals. Within the precincts of the golf course is ensconced a little fortress to one of the sons of Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last Mughal emperor. It was his son's beloved Lal Kunwar who had enjoyed living in that fortress. The home of Mirza Ghalib, the renowned Urdu poet, who

made such a significant contribution to the Urdu literature and enriched the social circles of high profiled citizens, is another landmark. But these are just a few. Delhi, old and new is replete with such memories and monuments and in the old world charm is remembered for its polished 'urbanity'. As Percival Spear observes: "The tumult and the shouting dies, the captains and the kind depart. But there is left the glitter and the culture of nobles without their suicidal struggle for power, the dignity and learning of the court, without its folly and its weakness."

The twilight of Mughal Delhi still had a charm of its own which, though quite different from the attraction of the bygone eras had a kind of intellectual quality. The men of literature receive no less respect and importance than anyone in the highest ranks of hierarchy. The great poet Mirza Ghalib may have bemoaned the loss of pomp and glory around the Nahr-i-Bihisht in Chandni Chowk, but he had nothing to lament about the recognition, honour and respect that he received as a poet except that he neither could revel in wealth nor live in luxuriant comfort.

Though there was no ruling authority, life in the city continued more or less at its former pace. Trade and commerce flourished as before. The expansion of the city kept up with the process of change. It has been mentioned that

one of the deputy commissioners had taken up the expansion work moving outwards from the centre, developing suburbs. Under his supervision the suburbs seem to have developed well. One of them named after him was called Deputy Ganj. The Civil Lines and the locality of Darya Ganj which even earlier were a residential area of the nobility, developed further as the locality of the elite. The bungalow type of residences began to grow. The Delhiwallas watched the transitional phase with mixed feelings of dismay and suspense.

But it was the sustained interest and influence of European culture on the previous emperor Jahangir which seems to have put a seal on the fate of not only Delhi, but on the fate of the country itself. Jahangir's attitude towards religion was somewhat unpronounced. This gave the Jesuits reason to believe that they could perhaps bring the emperor himself within the fold of Christianity. But it was not easy to define his religious leanings. He sincerely believed in God and loved to discuss spiritual matters with Hindu saints as well as mullahs and missionaries. He kept paintings of Christ and other saints within his view. It is very difficult to say if it was the emperor's appreciation of Christianity or the persuasive skill and statesmanship of Sir Thomas Roe, the young envoy, the duly accredited ambassador of England from James I to Jahangir which led to the signing of the trade pact between

India and England. But that was indeed the fateful beginning.

Visitors from other countries had always found India a fascinating country to visit and India as usual always kept its doors open and its hospitality alive and warm. But the dwindling authority was an open invitation to foreigners to make inroads and capture the platform. The pact signed by Jahangir earlier had set the stage. The British who had come initially as traders made inroads and straightened and affirmed their path by creating disharmony amongst people. The subtle intrigues smoothened the way further. The John Company which had appeared on the horizon some time ago settled firmly as the prestigious East India Company. Though settled as a private firm, the company became the representative of the British nation.

When they had established themselves as the rulers, the British had chosen Calcutta as their capital. A grand vice regal lodge was constructed in Belvedere near Alipore. The vast sprawling lawns with wide stretch of greenery surrounded the palatial mansion. The boundary was lined up with every variety of Indian fruit trees and the choicest variety of flowering trees like Moulshri, Champa, Hawaiian Champa and many other which spread a heavenly soothing fragrance. This row of trees had a second line of flower shrubs, followed by flower beds. The Belvedere estate was an idyllic adobe of the power wielders but pretty soon it was Delhi



Pl. 137. Rashtrapati Bhawan.



Pl. 138. Close-up view of Rashtrapati Bhawan.

which cast its irresistible spell and the inevitable followed.

In the beginning, the British Cantonment was around the ridge. Probably it was the strategic position of that place which brought them success in various encounters and lastly during the war of 1857. Their success influenced and confirmed their choice of this particular area to establish the residency. This was a piece of land lying away from the city and had the advantage of being able to

maintain an exclusive identity. Besides this since the land was on a narrow mound which lay to the north of the city, it had the added advantage of security.

Later on, it was decided to move the city to a more open land. The largest mass of rock was chosen to be the focus of the city and the central buildings. Six meters of a rock which was 15 meters in height was blasted away. The depression thus caused was filled to form a 9 meters platform. Around this depression red



stone walls were built. On the high platform were built the secretariat buildings in two detached blocks, the North Block and the South Block. The centre was occupied by the Viceroy's residence. This entire area comprised nine villages and encompassed Raisina Hill as well. The Viceroy's residence with its high dome was a sprawling mansion, which largely followed the British pattern. This building had a large and spacious Durbar hall. After India's independence, it came to be known as the Rashtrapati

Bhavan (Pls. 137-138). It has a beautiful garden, the Mughal Garden (Pls. 139-141). This garden has a large variety of flower beds, manicured lawns and lovely water channels. The garden is opened to public for two weeks.

The layout of the city bears the true testimony to Lord Lutyen's architectural genius. The wide roads with tree-lined avenues, the spacious lush green lawns around the war memorial called India Gate have been further beautified by big



Pl. 139. Mughal Garden.

fountains in between, connected with water channels. India Gate (Pl. 142), a fitting memorial to the gallant soldiers who laid their lives during the Second World War is again an architectural marvel and perhaps excels the Gateway of India at Mumbai.

The most popular spot of New Delhi was Connaught Circus, which was the inner circle. This was the popular shopping centre of the elite (Pl. 143). This complex was named after the Duke of Connaught. Though almost forgotten by historians, he was the most obedient and the favourite son of Queen Victoria. A mild mannered man he lived his entire life in Her Majesty's service. The Duke

personified the Royal seal. His presence at formal functions was considered the next best to the presence of the Queen herself. The Duke and the Duchess spoke 'Hindustani' fluently.

Delhi has been a place much sought after in every era and by every monarch. Besides being a great imperial city, it had the distinction of being the most renowned city known for Constitution to Canton. Finally and notably too, the fifteenth century was a period of great activity in Delhi. This century contributed much to art, literature and architecture. Imperial as well as provincial architecture contributed many motifs to the Mughal architecture. The



Pl. 140. Another view of Mughal Garden.



Pl. 141. Some plant species at Mughal Garden.

performing arts flourished as they had never flourished before because of the patronage which they received during these times. Many works on music were also produced during this period. In the fields of science and literature, quite a number of meritorious works were produced. All in all, there was a continuity of progress in many directions. The most significant is the motivation to

synthesize in spite of conflicts and social and political upheavals.

So the tale remains an unending story an ongoing process of making, unmaking and re-embarking. It is a story to be remembered for lessons it teaches through the mistakes made by monarchies or the factors which caused the downfall of the empires.



Pl. 142. India Gate.



Pl. 143. A view of Connaught Place.

Appendix

Chroniclers Whose Accounts Have
Enlivened The Pages Of This Book

1. Al-biruni
2. Alexander Cunningham
3. Abul Fazal
4. Ibn Batuta
5. Ziauddin Barni
6. Shams-i-Shiraz Afif (Hafiz)
7. Abdulla
8. Tavernier
9. Mohammad Qasim Farishta
10. Fa-Hien
11. Hiuen Tsang
12. William Finch
13. Thomas Roe
14. T.G. Frasier
15. Francois Bernier
16. Sidi Ali Reis
17. Babur

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